ABADAZAD™

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Little Martha IN ABADAZAD

BY FRANKLIN O. BARRIE

ILLUSTRATED BY ARTHUR N. PIERSON

but the Lanky Man would not hear of it. "Such sentiments," he hissed, poking that well-honed, threatening nose through the bars, "may be appropriate for Queen Ija and those simpletons in Inconceivable–but they have no place in my city."

"You are a very bad man!" Little Martha exclaimed.

"Indeed, I am," sneered the Lanky Man, incredibly pleased with himself. "There is no more sinister specimen in all of Abadazad." With that he turned the key, locking Little Martha in the cell, then turned away and skittered down the dark corridor.

Martha sat on the cold floor of her cell and wept. Weeping, she knew, was a valuable thing to do in times of helplessness and despair, but only for a minute or two (or three, at best). So, after two minutes and fourteen seconds of tears and trembling, the girl wiped her eyes, wiped her nose, got to her feet and...

Well, that was the problem. She had no idea what to do next. "Think, Martha, think!" she said aloud; but, for all her efforts, no useful thoughts emerged. She was seriously considering weeping for another minute or two (or three, at best), when she heard a familiar voice, echoing from across the dungeon:

"Martha?" called the voice. "Martha, is that you?"

"Professor Headstrong!" Martha squealed excitedly, knowing that if her dear friend was near she would soon be free. "Professor Headstrong, I'm over here! Quickly, quickly," she urged, "let me out!"

"That, I'm afraid," sighed the sonerous voice, "is something I cannot do. For you see, my beloved child, I

"--AM AS MUCH A PRISONER HERE AS YOU ARE!"
AND THAT'S WHERE WE'LL STOP TONIGHT.
PLEASE READ SOME EXTRA?
NUH-UH. WE'VE GOTTA GET UP EARLY TOMORROW--
C'MON, KATIE--JUST A SMIDGE?
HEY, LOOK, MATT...IF YOU DON'T WANNA GO TO THE STREET FAIR--
PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE, PLEASE--JUST THE SMIDGIEST OF THE WIDGIEST...?
THE SMIDGIEST.
"A PRISONER?" LITTLE MARTHA EXCLAIMED. "OH, NO, PROFESSOR, NOT YOU, TOO!"
"IT SEEMS," HEADSTRONG REPLIED, SOUNDING HUMBLED AND EMBARRASSED--AN EXTREMELY RARE OCCURRENCE FOR ONE SO ENAMORED OF HIS OWN INTELLECT--
--"THAT THE LANKY MAN IS SLIGHTLY BETTER AT CHESS THAN I'D ANTICIPATED."
ABADAZAD
ABADAZAD
What can I say? When it came to my little brother...
...I was a total pushover.

Guess that's what the Divorce Wars *do* to kids. You either sink alone or swim together.

Dad ditched us when Matt was two and I was five. *The Great Herbert Jameson* left Brooklyn for Seattle or Portland or *some* stupid place--and we haven't seen him since.

Not that I really care. I mean, if the guy can't even take a minute once a year to drop Matt a *birthday card*, he's not *worth* caring about.

Anyway, with Dad gone, *Frantic Frances*... that's my mom...got *totally* weird. She kept changing jobs (and always getting *fired*), taking night classes (which she never *finished*), going out on dates (with guys she couldn't *stand*)--and generally acting *crazy*.

I don't mean *crazy* crazy. It's not like she thought she was getting secret messages from *Martians* or anything...

...but she was doing stuff like locking herself in the *bathroom* in the middle of the night--I guess because she didn't want to wake us up--and then crying so loud that she always *did*.

Or she'd show up at *school* sometimes... right in the middle of the day...take us out of class, and drag us home without telling us *why*.

We always imagined some *Great Disaster*... the apartment building burned to the ground, everything we owned turned to black ash...

...but as soon as we'd get back--no flames in sight--Mom would walk straight into her bedroom, lock the door, and go to *sleep*...

...leaving Matty and me sitting there wondering what the heck *that* was all about.

Look, I *understand*. *Sort* of.

I mean, your husband dumps you and leaves you alone to take care of two bratty kids. (Well, *one* bratty kid and a pint-sized *saint*.) How much fun is *that*?

Of course, Mom wasn't exactly wrapped too tight *before* Herbert the Great skipped out. (I didn't start calling her Frantic Frances for *nothing*.) But I have to admit she did *one* thing right...

She gave me *Matt*.
First time I saw my little brother in the hospital I was *crazy* about him. I guess I'd been waiting my *whole life* for him to be born, only I didn't *know* it.
Mom put that prune-faced squirt in my arms and it was like meeting my oldest, dearest friend...for the *very first time*. I know that doesn't make much *sense*, but that's how it was.
Okay, it's true that sometimes I used to call him *Saint Matt the Perfect*...
...but he *knew* I didn't mean it in a nasty way.
(Well, maybe *once* in a while I did, but I always felt *rotten* afterwards.) And the fact is, he *was* perfect, mostly.
Sure, Matt got *scared* easy. And he kept wetting the *bed* till he was five.
And *Mr. Webster*, our assistant principal, said he *depended* on me too much...which he probably *did*. But so what? I depended on *him*, too.
He was *nothing* like me: never messed up in *school*. Never made Frantic Francis mad. He was *way* smart. And he was polite to *everybody*...even people that didn't *deserve* it.
Saint Matt had this way of *looking* at the world. Like he was seeing something I *couldn't*. That *nobody* else could. Like there was a whole *universe* hidden underneath this one.
I dunno. I can't really *explain* it--but I could *feel* it: With Matty, life was good just the way it was.
Know what I *mean*? *No*? Then how about *this*...
He was my *brother*. And either you *get* that or you don't.

One of the things Matt loved more than almost anything—sometimes I think he even loved it more than me or Frances—was Abadazad.
You've heard of Abadazad, right? I mean...duh...who hasn't? Even if you're, like, illiterate and haven't read the books, you've seen the movies or cartoons...the toys and video games.
But just in case you're totally clueless:
The first book, Little Martha in Abadazad, was written in 1898 by this guy named Franklin O. Barrie. It was about an orphan girl who finds a magical Blue Globe that transports her to a fairyland called (what else?) Abadazad.
Sounds familiar, right? Down the rabbit hole, over the rainbow, through the wardrobe? But Abadazad did it better than all of them.
Barrie wrote, I dunno, nineteen or twenty Abadazad books that were published between 1898 and 1924 and, after he died, his daughter, P.J. Barrie, wrote fifteen more. There are still people writing Abadazad stories today.
(I only know this stuff 'cause Matt had a book called Franklin O. Barrie, Dreamer of Abadazad that he used to make me read to him over and over. So don't think I'm some kind of nerd like those morons that go to Abadazad conventions dressed up like The Balloonicorn, okay?)
Anyway, none of the books anyone else did could compare with Barrie's. He wrote about Abadazad like he'd been there. Like he knew every corner of that place. Like he'd walked up the Living Staircase to the capital city of Inconceivable and—
Hey, look, I'm fourteen now. I wouldn't read a stupid kiddie book if you paid me. I'm just telling you about it because it meant so much to Matt, okay?
Anyway, I don't know why I'm going on and on about this when what you really want to know about is what happened that day...

...at the street fair.
WHOA! LOOK, KATIE!
HEY! HEY, MATTIE... SLOW DOWN!
LOOK!
134TH STREET FAIR
HARDWARE
BOUNCY RIDE
DON'T RUN AWAY FROM ME LIKE THAT, OKAY? NEVER.
DON'T YOU KNOW THE WHOLE WORLD'S FILLED WITH WEIRD PEOPLE--
--WHO JUST CAN'T WAIT TO DO WEIRD THINGS TO LITTLE KIDS?
REALLY?
WHILE YOU'RE SLEEPING, I'M WATCHING THE TEN O'CLOCK NEWS.
YOU WOULDN'T BELIEVE SOME OF THE STUFF I'VE SEEN.
SO STAY CLOSE, OKAY?
OKAY--
--BUT I'M NOT WORRIED, KATIE. LONG AS YOU'RE AROUND, NOTHING BAD'S EVER GONNA HAPPEN TO ME.
YOU'D BETTER BELIEVE IT.

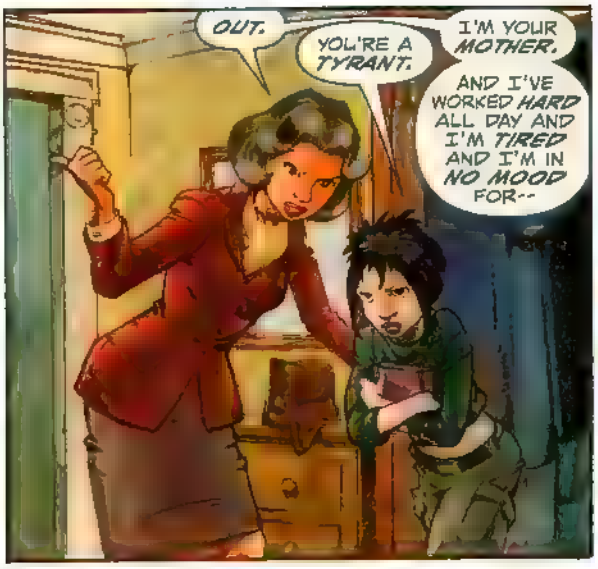
Mom gave us ten dollars each that morning (she was working Saturdays at *Video Magic* then, although...*surprise!*...she got *fired* the next week)...
WIN A LIVE GOLDFISH
...and so we rode every ride and played every game (Matt won a couple of sick-looking goldfish but I made him give them back. I'd flushed *enough* dead fish down the toilet, *thank* you)...
...and stuffed our faces with so much junk food that we nearly *barfed* in *stereo*.
SINBADS VOYAGE
It was really a *fantastic* day.

Too bad it didn't end there
ONE MORE RIDE ON THE BOATS, KATIE! JUST ONE MORE!
OUTTA TICKETS. OUTTA MONEY.
PLEEEEASE?
YOU'VE BEEN ON THE BOATS THREE TIMES ALREADY, MATTIE--AND IT'S AFTER SIX. MOM'S PROBABLY HOME BY NOW...AND YOU KNOW HOW SHE GETS IF WE'RE LATE.
FIVE MINUTES PAST CURFEW AND SHE'LL BE ON THE PHONE CALLING THE COPS.
IF THE LITTLE BOY WANTS TO GO ON THE BOAT RIDE JUST ONE MORE TIME... WELL, THEN, BY ALL MEANS--
--HE SHOULD.
HERE, M'BOY...TWO TICKETS. EXACTLY WHAT'S REQUIRED. A SHORT JOURNEY ACROSS THE OCEAN AND...HOME YOU'LL GO.
I DON'T THINK WE--
OKAY, OKAY-- BUT THEN WE GO STRAIGHT HOME.
UH... THANKS A LOT FOR THE TICKETS--
--MISTER...?

SINBAD'S VOYAGE
TICKET BOOTH
2 TICKETS
I know, I know, you shouldn't take things from strangers and blahblahblah but, really, it wasn't like he was giving us candy or offering us a ride in his car
He gave us a couple of tickets-- and then he left
No big deal.

. right?

KATIE...?
KLIK
DON'T YOU KNOW I *HATE* IT WHEN YOU DO THIS?
DO *WHAT?*
WHAT DO YOU *THINK?* HIDE IN THE *CLOSET.*
I *WASN'T* HIDING. I *LIKE* IT IN HERE.
IT'S THE ONLY PLACE IN THIS WHOLE STUPID APARTMENT WHERE I CAN GET SOME *PRIVACY.*
NOW HOW ABOUT SHUTTING THE *DOOR* AND LEAVING ME *ALONE?*


OUT.
YOU'RE A TYRANT.
I'M YOUR MOTHER.
AND I'VE WORKED HARD ALL DAY AND I'M TIRED AND I'M IN NO MOOD FOR--

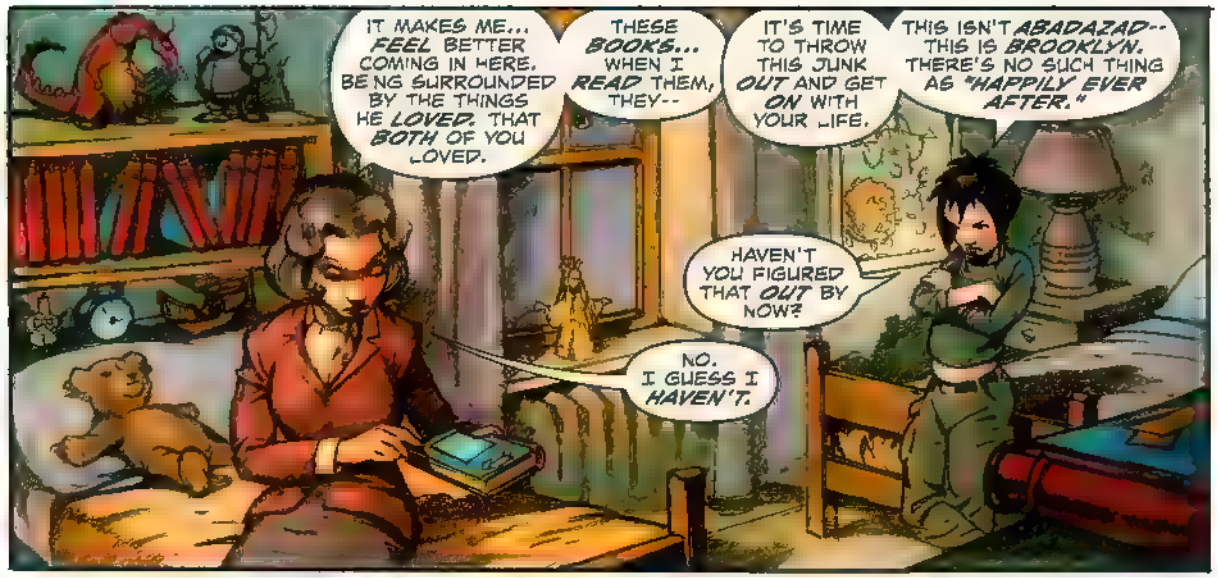
WHAT'S THAT?
NOTHING.
A DIARY?
YOU'RE KEEPING A DIARY?
OH, THAT'S WONDERFUL. I'M SO GLAD YOU TOOK DR. FRAYDA'S SUGGESTION TO HEART AND--
FIRST OF ALL, DR. FRAYDA IS AN IDIOT...AND IF YOU THINK I'M EVER GOING BACK TO SEE THAT STUPID SHRINK AGAIN YOU'RE A BIGGER IDIOT.

I'D RATHER JUMP OUT OF THE WINDOW THAN LET HER MESS AROUND IN MY HEAD ANY MORE.
SECOND OF ALL, THIS ISN'T A DIARY. THESE ARE MY MEMOIRS...AND WHEN YOU'RE OLD AND GRAY AND SENILE I'M GONNA HAVE THEM PUBLISHED--
--AND THEN THE WHOLE WORLD WILL KNOW ALL OUR DARK AND DIRTY SECRETS.

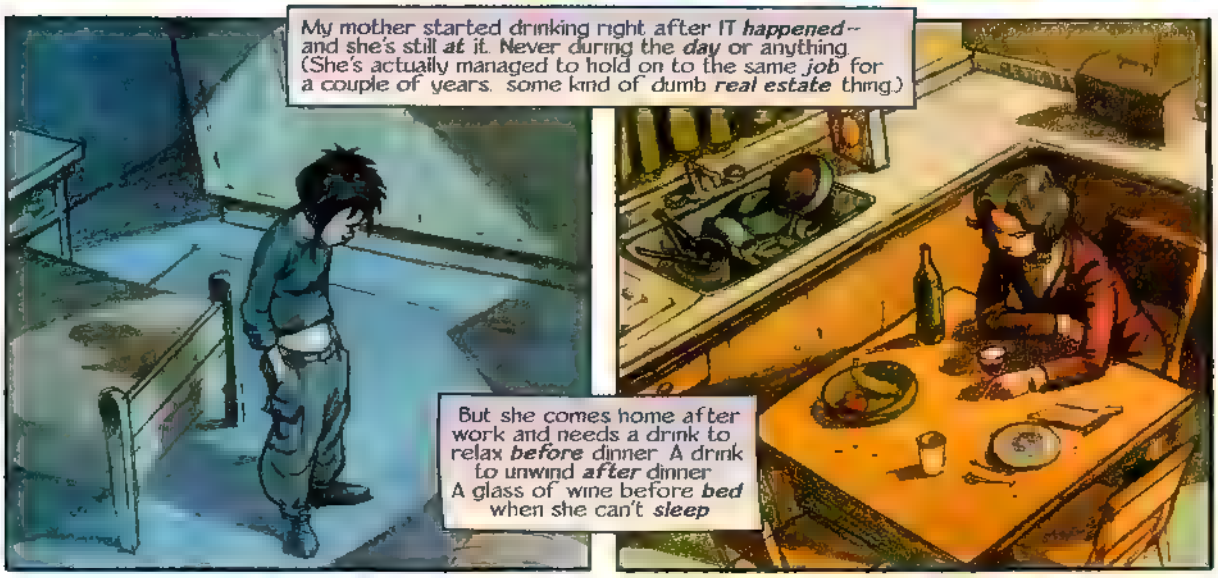
WHY DO YOU SAY THESE THINGS, KATIE? DO YOU ACTUALLY ENJOY HURTING ME?
HOW LONG'S IT GONNA TAKE YOU TO GET THAT I DON'T WANT YOU TO CALL ME KATIE ANY MORE. MY NAME IS KATE. K-A-T--
I KNOW HOW TO SPELL IT.

NOT AGAIN...
NOT AGAIN WHAT?
YOU'RE STILL PUTTING THESE STUPID POSTERS UP?
THEW JAMESON
THEY'RE NOT--
Y'KNOW, SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I'M LIVING IN A CRYPT.

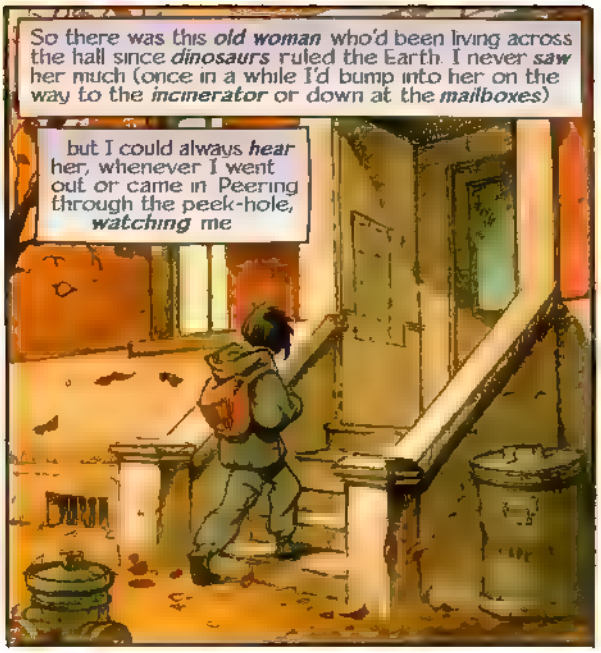
I MEAN, YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED ANYTHING IN HIS ROOM IN FIVE YEARS.
IT WAS YOUR ROOM, TOO.
HAVE YOU SEEN THIS CHILD?
A LONG TIME AGO.
IN CASE YOU HAVEN'T NOTICED, I SLEEP ON THE COUCH.


IT MAKES ME... FEEL BETTER COMING IN HERE. BEING SURROUNDED BY THE THINGS HE LOVED. THAT BOTH OF YOU LOVED.
THESE BOOKS... WHEN I READ THEM, THEY--
IT'S TIME TO THROW THIS JUNK OUT AND GET ON WITH YOUR LIFE.
THIS ISN'T ABADAZAD-- THIS IS BROOKLYN. THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS "HAPPILY EVER AFTER."
HAVEN'T YOU FIGURED THAT OUT BY NOW?
NO. I GUESS I HAVEN'T.

IT'S BEEN FIVE YEARS, FRANCES. HE'S DEAD.
GET OVER IT.


My mother started drinking right after IT happened-- and she's still at it. Never during the day or anything. (She's actually managed to hold on to the same job for a couple of years. some kind of dumb real estate thing.)
But she comes home after work and needs a drink to relax before dinner. A drink to unwind after dinner. A glass of wine before bed when she can't sleep

I liked it a lot better when she was crying on the *toilet*
Hey, I'm not *stupid* I know it's all because of my *brother* (and, okay, *I'm* not the easiest person in the world to live with)
. but I *meant* what I said to Frances. Matt was *gone*. Gone *forever*
And it was time to get *over* it


So there was this *old woman* who'd been living across the hall since *dinosaurs* ruled the Earth. I never *saw* her much (once in a while I'd bump into her on the way to the *incinerator* or down at the *mailboxes*)
but I could always *hear* her, whenever I went out or came in. Peering through the peek-hole, *watching* me

Guess when people get *that* old (and *Mrs. Vaughn* was so ancient she looked like she'd been *dead* for fifty *years*), their lives are *so boring* that the only thing they can do to stay interested is watch soap operas on *TV*
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303

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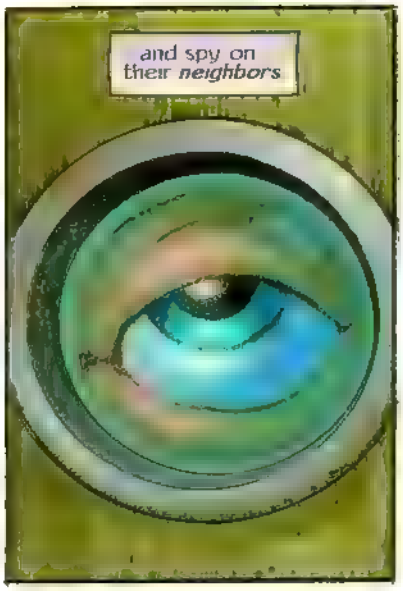
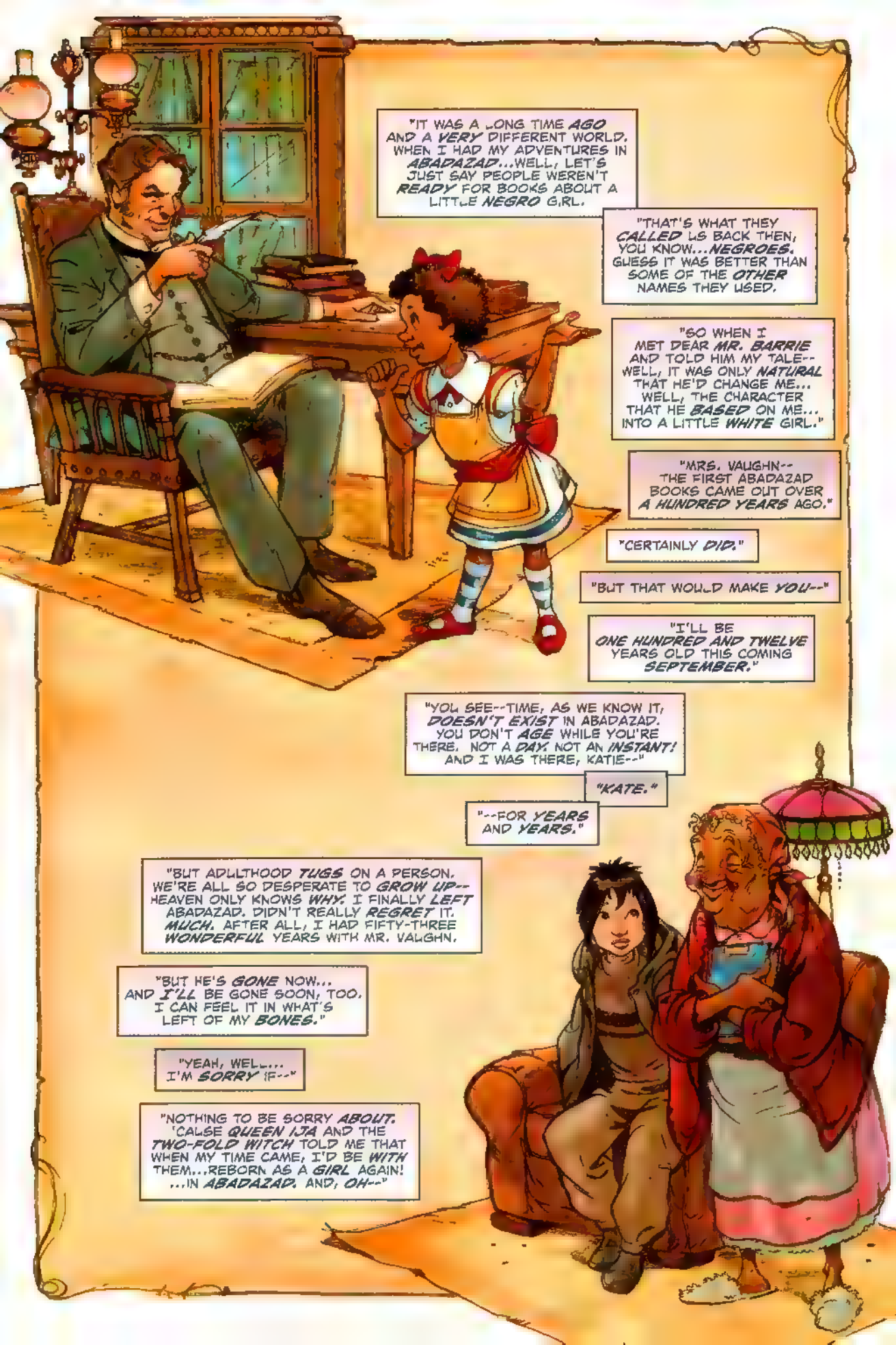

and spy on their *neighbors*

...PSSST. KATIE!
PSSSST!
YOU... YOU WANT SOMETHING...?
I WANT YOU, LITTLE LADY.
HEY!
I WANT YOU!
3°Z
SLAM
WHAT'S THE BIG IDEA?
NOT SO BIG. JUST TEA.
TEA?
YOU DRINK TEA, DON'T YOU? YOU EAT COOKIES?
YEAH, I GUESS SO--
Why did I stay? I really don't know

Maybe I *needed* a couple of cookies to cheer me *up*.
Y'see my grade adviser, ***Mrs. Stern*** (and, boy, was she *ever*), had called me down to her office that afternoon. I thought she was going to give me the old *"You're a smart girl and I know you can try **harder**"* speech..
but it turned out to be the *"How would you like to spend another year in the **ninth grade?**"* routine instead. To tell you the truth, I didn't expect *that*
Mrs. Vaughn's house had that ***old person*** smell. *You* know, like everything in it was preserved in *plastic* since *1950*. My ***Gramma Ethel's*** apartment smelled the same way.
(Gramma Ethel died like ***two weeks*** after Herbert The Great ditched us. Did I mention ***that*** one? Great timing, huh?) It was actually kind of ***nice***, that smell. In a disgustmg, *"**Mummies From Beyond The Grave**"* sort of way.
I still ***miss*** my Gramma. So I guess I went ***brain-dead*** and started thinking that maybe Mrs. Vaughn got as ***lonely*** as Gramma used to.
Figured, hey--where's the harm in eating a couple of ***cookies*** (they were kind of stale, like old lady cookies always are, but they still ***tasted*** pretty good) and brightening her otherwise dark and dismal ***existence?***

SO--
--BEEN A WHILE SINCE WE'VE HAD A CHAT, HASN'T IT?
I DON'T THINK WE'VE EVER HAD A CHAT.
THEN WE'RE LONG OVERDUE.
Bad idea, huh?
AH--
--YOU'VE NOTICED MY COLLECTION...?
SOMETHING, HUH?
YOU'LL NEVER FIND ANYTHING LIKE IT ANYWHERE IN THIS WORLD.
WHAT IS THIS...?
...STUFF YOU'VE BEEN SAVING SINCE YOU WERE A KID?

I THOUGHT WE HAD ALL THE ABADAZAD JUNK EVER MADE...BUT I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THIS.
THAT'S 'CAUSE THEY'RE REAL.
HUH?
THEY'RE REAL. STRAIGHT FROM QUEEN JA'S PALACE IN INCONCEIVABLE.
That's when I knew I'd taken a left turn into Looney Land.
YOU KNOW THIS, OF COURSE. THE BLUE GLOBE. ENCHANTED BY THE TWO-FOLD WITCH HERSELF.
AND IF YOUR HEART IS PURE ENOUGH, TRUE ENOUGH... AND IF YOU KNOW THE MAGIC WORDS--
--IT WILL CARRY YOU... IN LESS THAN A SECOND...OVER THE EIGHT OCEANS--
--AND INTO ABADAZAD.
GEE, IT REALLY IS GETTING LATE. MY MOM... SHE'S LIKE A MEGA-WORRIER...AND IF I DON'T--
SEE THAT? THAT'S ME.
WHO'S YOU?
THAT.
LITTLE MARTHA?
MARTHA COOPER. THAT WAS MY NAME BEFORE I MARRIED THE LATE AND MUCH-LAMENTED MR. VAUGHN.
BUT WHEN I WAS A GIRL EVERYONE CALLED ME LITTLE MARTHA.
OF COURSE THEY DID.


"IT WAS A LONG TIME AGO AND A VERY DIFFERENT WORLD, WHEN I HAD MY ADVENTURES IN ABADAZAD...WELL, LET'S JUST SAY PEOPLE WEREN'T READY FOR BOOKS ABOUT A LITTLE NEGRO GIRL.
"THAT'S WHAT THEY CALLED US BACK THEN, YOU KNOW...NEGROES. GUESS IT WAS BETTER THAN SOME OF THE OTHER NAMES THEY USED.
"SO WHEN I MET DEAR MR. BARRIE AND TOLD HIM MY TALE--WELL, IT WAS ONLY NATURAL THAT HE'D CHANGE ME... WELL, THE CHARACTER THAT HE BASED ON ME... INTO A LITTLE WHITE GIRL."
"MRS. VAUGHN--THE FIRST ABADAZAD BOOKS CAME OUT OVER A HUNDRED YEARS AGO."
"CERTAINLY DID."
"BUT THAT WOULD MAKE YOU--"
"I'LL BE ONE HUNDRED AND TWELVE YEARS OLD THIS COMING SEPTEMBER."
"YOU SEE--TIME, AS WE KNOW IT, DOESN'T EXIST IN ABADAZAD. YOU DON'T AGE WHILE YOU'RE THERE. NOT A DAY. NOT AN INSTANT! AND I WAS THERE, KATIE--"
"KATE."
"--FOR YEARS AND YEARS."
"BUT ADULTHOOD TUGS ON A PERSON. WE'RE ALL SO DESPERATE TO GROW UP--HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHY. I FINALLY LEFT ABADAZAD. DIDN'T REALLY REGRET IT. MUCH. AFTER ALL, I HAD FIFTY-THREE WONDERFUL YEARS WITH MR. VAUGHN.
"BUT HE'S GONE NOW... AND I'LL BE GONE SOON, TOO. I CAN FEEL IT IN WHAT'S LEFT OF MY BONES."
"YEAH, WELL... I'M SORRY IF--"
"NOTHING TO BE SORRY ABOUT. 'CAUSE QUEEN IJA AND THE TWO-FOLD WITCH TOLD ME THAT WHEN MY TIME CAME, I'D BE WITH THEM...REBORN AS A GIRL AGAIN! ...IN ABADAZAD. AND, OH--"

--HOW MY HEART ACHES FOR THAT DAY.
YOUR BROTHER IS ALIVE.
KLIK
WHAT?
I SAID MATT'S ALIVE. HE'S BEEN KIDNAPPED BY THE LANKY MAN.
OLD LANKS FOUND A WAY TO CROSS OVER INTO OUR WORLD--
HE'S BEEN STEALING CHILDREN... PURE-HEARTED CHILDREN LIKE YOUR BROTHER...AND HEAVEN ONLY KNOWS WHAT HE INTENDS TO DO WITH THEM.
THAT'S NOT FUNNY.
NO. NO, IT'S NOT. NOT FUNNY AT ALL.
IF I WAS YOUNGER, I WOULD'VE SNIFFED THE OLD DEVIL OUT SOONER--BUT I'M NOT GOOD FOR MUCH THESE DAYS.
OH, BUT YOU, KATIE--
I'LL HELP YOU GET TO ABADAZAD. YOU TELL QUEEN IJA AND SHE'LL FIND YOUR BROTHER AND STOP LANKY FROM--
LISTEN, LADY--
--YOU WANNA LIVE IN SOME WARPED LITTLE FANTASY WORLD...IMAGINE YOU'RE SOMEBODY YOU'RE NOT... FINE...GO AHEAD--
--BUT LEAVE ME OUT OF IT!
SLAM

knew monsters intimately, having faced her share of them in the course of her many adventures.

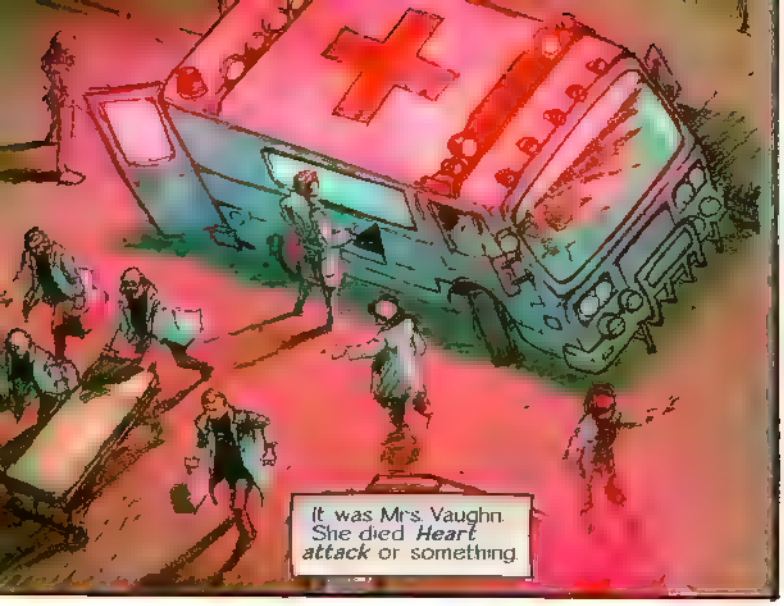
She had no doubt the Headmistress was drafting a telegram to Colonel Cooper at this very moment. What would the Colonel do, she wondered, when his tour of the pyramids was interrupted by word of his daughter's transgressions? Little Martha had no intention of waiting to find out.

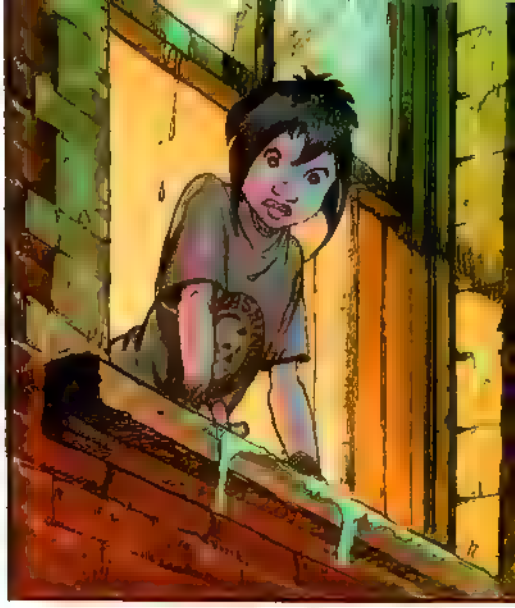
With great determination, she dragged an old trunk out of her closet. (It was a massively heavy affair, but one should never underestimate the power of an outraged little girl.) Utilizing the key she always wore 'round her neck, Martha undid the lock and rummaged beneath the neatly-folded clothes until she found a secret compartment, within which was hidden a most extraordinary Globe. Molded of a glass-like substance bluer than the bluest sea, it rested atop a golden base upon which were scratched strange and beautiful symbols, like secret messages from the angels.

Both hands placed firmly upon the Blue Globe (which seemed to gently vibrate and hum, as if warmly greeting an old friend), Little Martha closed her eyes tight and, speaking not so much with her tongue as with her heart, intoned the following:

"I summon Queen Ija and the Two-Fold Witch to carry me to that Place where sorrow has no home, where time has no meaning, where joy lives forever!" And then seven times she proclaimed a word that was far more than a word, a name that was beyond all names: "Abadazad! Abadazad! Abadazad! Abadazad! Abadazad! Abadazad!

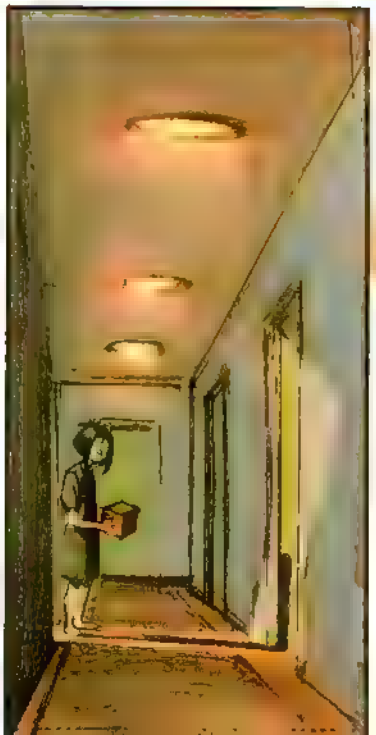
ABADAZAD.
later that week, I saw an *ambulance* outside the building


It was Mrs. Vaughn. She died *Heart attack* or something.



One less *crazy old lady* in the world, right?
nok nok

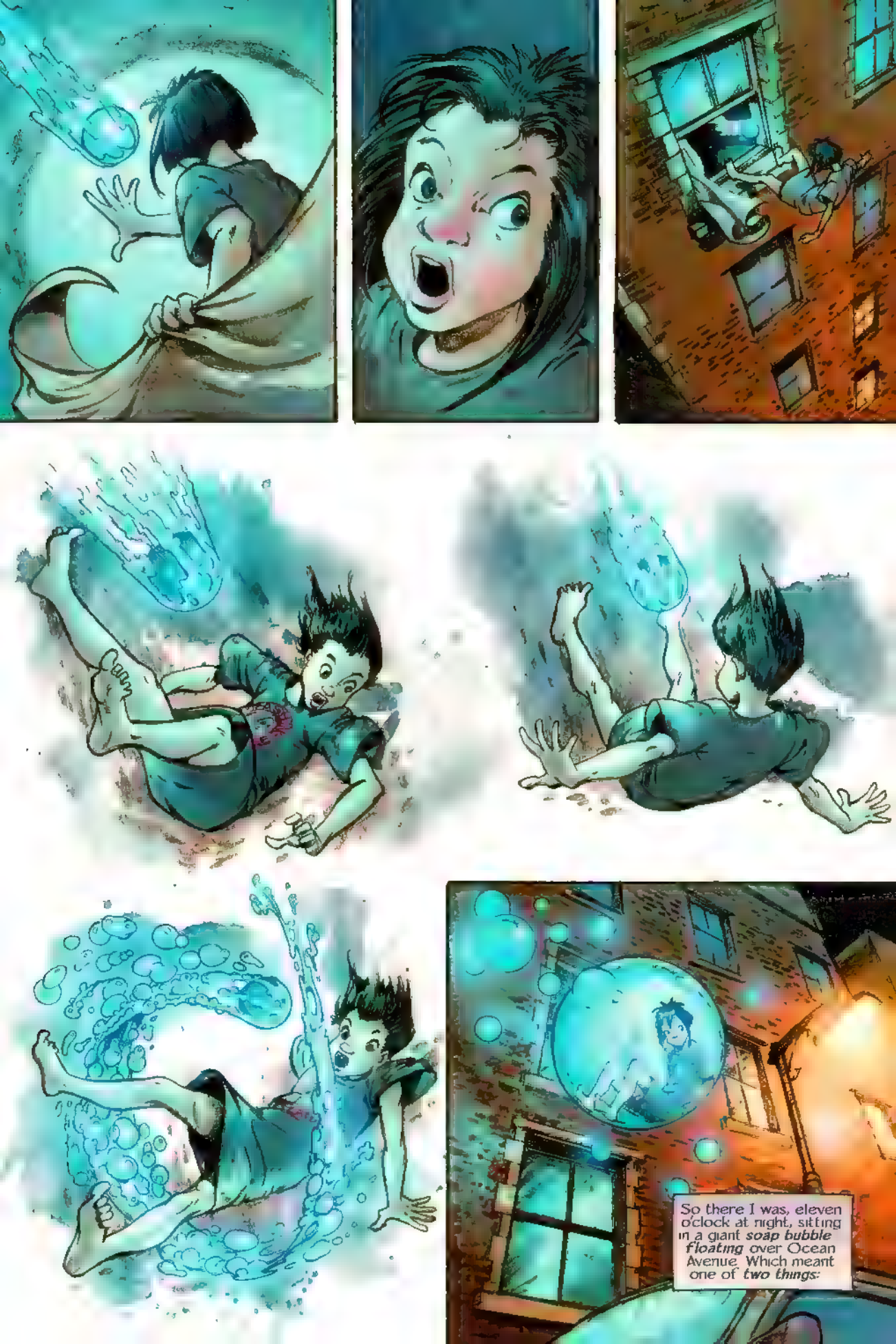
NO PATE



...YOU WANNA EXPLAIN THIS?
HEY-- THAT'S MINE.
FUNNY. IT'S ADDRESSED TO ME.
I THREW THAT AWAY AND YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO--TO--
FISH MY OWN LETTER OUT OF THE TRASH?
MRS. STERN HATES ME. ANYTHING SHE SAYS IN THERE IS A TOTAL LIE.
SO YOU HAVEN'T BEEN CUTT NG CLASSES? YOU'RE NOT FAILING MATH AND SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES?
KATIE--
--KATE... LOOK, WE CAN'T GO ON LIKE THIS.
I LOVE YOU, SWEETHEART. I HAVEN'T BEEN THE PERFECT MOTHER... LET'S FACE IT, I HAVEN'T EVEN COME CLOSE...
YEAH, WELL--
...BUT, GOD KNOWS, I'VE DONE MY BEST.

TELL ME WHAT TO DO. TELL ME HOW I CAN HELP YOU.
LOOK, SWEETIE...I DON'T HAVE TO BE DR. FRAYDA TO KNOW HOW MUCH GUILT YOU'RE STILL CARRYING AROUND OVER--
I DON'T NEED ANY HELP FROM YOU.
GUILT? ME?
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WASN'T AROUND WHEN MATT NEEDED YOU! I WAS ALWAYS THERE FOR HIM! ALWAYS!
MAYBE IF YOU WEREN'T SUCH A SCREW-UP HE'D STILL BE HERE-- YOU EVER THINK OF THAT?
ALL THE TIME.
I'LL BE IN MY BEDROOM.
Did I feel bad for what I said? Sure. Contrary to popular belief, I'm not totally made of stone. But it was true, wasn't it?

I mean, if Frances *had* been there that day, instead of leaving Saint Matt with some brainless nine-year-old--maybe IT wouldn't have *happened*
It was all *her* fault
All of it.
I'M *SORRY*, MATTIE.
I'M *SORRY*.


So there I was, eleven o'clock at night, sitting in a giant *soap bubble floating* over Ocean Avenue. Which meant one of *two things:*

Either I was *sleeping*--and this was the *weirdest* dream I'd ever had
or I was *completely demented*
I *pinched* myself a couple of times to see if I'd *wake up*. Nothing happened
Then (just for a second) I actually thought of calling that moron *Doctor Frayda*
...y'know, just to see if she had any advice for a kid whose *mind* had just melted all over the living room *floor*
But all of a sudden (don't ask me *how*)
I knew *exactly* what to do
I SUMMON *QUEEN IJA* AND THE *TWO-FOLD WITCH* TO CARRY ME TO THAT PLACE WHERE SORROW HAS *NO HOME*--
--WHERE TIME HAS *NO MEANING*... WHERE *JOY* LIVES *FOREVER!*
ABADAZAD! ABADAZAD! ABADAZAD! ABADAZAD! ABADAZAD! ABADAZAD! ABADA--

--ZAD...!
I know, I know· I should've called the shrink
INCONCEIVABLE!

NEXT ISSUE
ABADAZAD™
#2
PLOOF

ABADAZAD™

CrossGen

#2 APRIL 2004

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INCONCEIVABLE

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came tumbling from the sky. Not a meteor or comet, as she'd first assumed, but, of all things, a head. An actual human head. Well, perhaps human wasn't the proper word. The thing certainly resembled a man's head, but it was twice the size of any the girl had ever seen. The eyes were swollen, glazed over with stupidity and spite, the nostrils, each one fat and wide enough to hold a grapefruit, flared and closed like bellows. The massive ears flapped like the wings of a bat.

Little Martha was understandably disturbed by the sight of the head-thing; even more so when it began making strange guttural noises, as if red hot lava were rising in its throat. It opened its thin-lipped mouth, revealing teeth that were cracked and yellowed, coming to hazardous points. Afraid the creature might bite, Martha hopped back in alarm. "What is it?" she whispered urgently to Mr. Gloom.

Gloom attempted to speak, but, as much as his mouth moved, no sound emerged. His eyes were nearly as wide and bulging as the head-thing's and Martha could see the poor cloud-man was wholly terrified. The sight of her dear friend so stricken seemed to dissolve the girl's own fears and she bravely stepped forward toward the thing, leaning into its repulsive face. "Who are you?" she demanded, "and what right do you have to come falling out of the sky scaring people half to death?"

"I," slurred the head-thing in a thick, dull voice, "am a Rocket Head. And it's my job to come falling out of the sky scaring people to death."

"Your job?" Little Martha replied, suddenly furious. "Are you saying that someone has actually hired you to do such a terrible thing?"

"Indeed," rejoined The Rocket Head.

"Who?" challenged Martha.

The Rocket Head grinned, a fairly hideous sight, and spoke three words: "The Lanky Man." Martha didn't know what those words meant, but they made her uneasy nonetheless. "By the way," added the Rocket Head, in his drawling, indolent fashion. "Boom."

"Boom?" inquired the girl, now as confused as she was uneasy.

"Boom," repeated the Rocket Head, who then proceeded to explode into precisely eight hundred and forty-six pieces. The noise was thunderous, the force of the explosion colossal, and Little Martha felt herself lifted off her feet and

"ABSURDLY BRAVE AND FEROCIOUSLY PRACTICAL."
SO IT WAS WITH ONE GIRL.
ABADAZAD
BUT HOW, I WONDER, WILL IT BE WITH THE OTHER?
SURELY, MY QUEEN, YOU ALREADY KNOW! YOU HAVE ONLY TO LOOK WITHIN TO SEE THE ANSWER!
NO ANSWER CAN BE MADE CLEAR--UNTIL THE PROPER QUESTION IS ASKED.
PROFOUND! INEFFABLE! EXTRAORDINARY!
I MUST RETURN TO MY ROOMS IMMEDIATELY IN ORDER TO SUFFICIENTLY PONDER THIS PENETRATING INSIGHT!
PONDER LATER, MY FRIEND. FOR NOW--CALL THE OTHERS.
WE HAVE MUCH TO DO--MUCH TO PREPARE--
--BEFORE OUR GUEST ARRIVES!
How many hours did my brother Matt and I spend locked away in our bedroom, reading about Little Martha's adventures in Abadazad? We believed, both of us, in the reality of that world.

We *knew*, with all our hearts, that every word was *true*
But, let's face it, I was only a *kid* then--still dumb enough to think that, maybe just *maybe*...
real life could be like a *fairy tale*
HEY... *HEY!* GET *OFFA* ME, WILL YOU?!
So one minute I'm in our apartment and the *next*--Well, I didn't know *where* I was
Okay, okay--I pretty much knew *right away* where I was. It's not like you run into *Shelloppers* and *Sour Flowers* in Brooklyn. Only place I'd ever *seen* those things was in Franklin O. Barrie's books.
Which meant that maybe the crazy old lady across the hall *wasn't* so crazy. That the *Blue Globe* she gave me had magically carried me over the Eight Oceans--and into *Abadazad*
On the other hand, I'd taken a header out the living room *window* a few minutes before so there was every chance I'd cracked my skull in half and I was *really* in an ambulance somewhere, *hallucinating*
Or maybe I was even *dead*

I've got a feeling that if you're dead you pretty much ***know*** it. Doesn't seem like you'd have to ***guess*** about something like that.

Which means I ***must*** have been hallucinating, right? Drifting along in some dumb fantasy my mind tossed together out of Barrie's ***stories***.

But if that was the case, how come the Shelloppers had ***disgusting*** breath (I'm talking ***major*** gross out--worse than Frantic Frances on a Sunday morning after one of her little ***binges***) and the Sour Flowers gave off a smell like an overflowing ***toilet?***

They never mentioned ***that*** in *"The Edges of Abadazad."*

"Edges" was the ***seventh*** Abadazad book--and the only one Barrie ever ***used*** those stupid characters in. No ***surprise*** I mean, the Shelloppers were ***nauseatingly*** cute

...and they talked in this annoying rhyme that used to drive me berserko. Even Saint Matt couldn't stand it.

"Can we help you, little friend?"
chirruped the Shellopper.
"Can we take your hand? We'll go
dancing far and wide across this magic land!"

And the Sour Flowers? ***Worse***. All they did was mope around and pout and burst out crying for no particular reason.

(Kind of like my mother after Herbert the Great left.)

It's like they all came out of another book entirely. *"Raggedy Idiot meets Peter the Irritating Rabbit"* or something. Guess that's why Barrie dumped them.

But, y'know what? When there's a six-foot Flower that stinks worse than a dead cat ***snarling*** in your face.

SHLURFF
cute and boring doesn't sound all that *bad*
SHWARFF
So *tell* me: if Id wanted to *dream* myself into the Abadazad I knew and loved

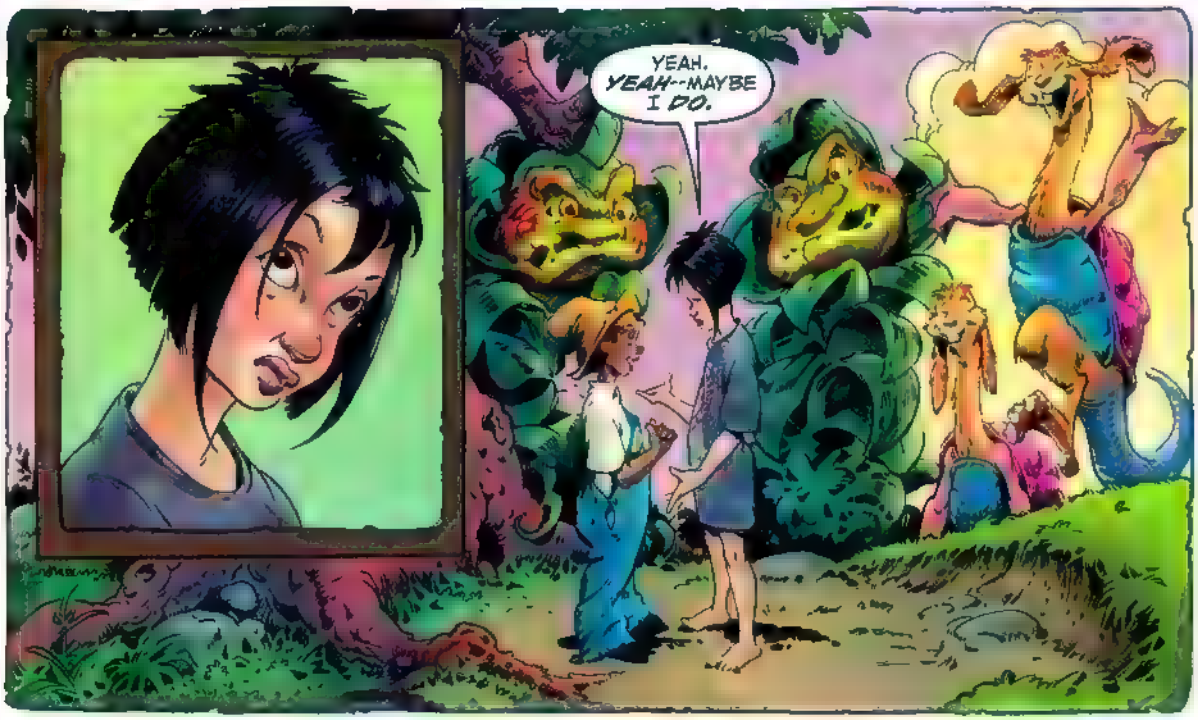
don't you think I could've done a better job?
BY ORDER OF HER MAJESTY QUEEN IJA--RELEASE THAT GIRL!
HAIL THE QUEEN.
SPOILSPORT!
KATIE! SWEETHEART! I'M SO HAPPY TO SEE YOU!
YOU...YOU ARE...?
OH, I KNEW YOU'D USE THE GLOBE TO FOLLOW ME HERE--BUT, WITH THE TIME DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WORLDS, I COULDN'T BE SURE WHEN!
THEN THE WATERLOGGED WARLOCK TOLD US HE'D DREAMED YOU ARRIVING--AND I HOPPED ON THE NEXT STAIRCASE AND--
E-EXCUSE ME, BUT--
--WHO THE HECK ARE YOU?
IT'S ME, KATIE! MRS. VAUGHN!
WELL, I SUPPOSE I'M LITTLE MARTHA AGAIN...AND FOREVER!
MRS. VAUGHN...?
UH-HUH.
MY NEIGHBOR?
UH-HUH.
MY REALLY OLD NEIGHBOR?
CORRECT.
MY REALLY OLD AND REALLY DEAD NEIGHBOR?
THE VERY SAME.

I'VE GOT TO BE DREAMING. EITHER THAT OR I'VE FINALLY GONE TOTALLY MENTAL.
DON'T YOU REMEMBER WHAT I TOLD YOU, DEAR? HOW QUEEN IJA AND THE TWO-FOLD WITCH WERE GONNA BRING ME BACK AFTER I DIED...MAKE ME A GIRL AGAIN--?
WELL, THEY WERE AS GOOD AS THEIR WORD!
AFTER YOU DIED. RIGHT. HOW COULD I FORGET?
I BET IF I WAIT A WHILE... I'LL WAKE UP. PROBABLY IN THE HOSPITAL WITH A BUNCH OF BROKEN BONES...BUT, HEY, THAT'S OKAY.
I CAN DEAL WITH THAT.
SWEETHEART, YOU'RE NOT DREAMING. YOU'RE NOT CRAZY. YOU'RE NOT IN ANY HOSPITAL.
YOU'RE JUST IN ABADAZAD, THAT'S ALL.
WELCOME HOME.
Then. .I don't know why. .but just for a second, I felt--happy. I guess. At least I think it was happiness. Truth is, it'd been so long. .
I'd almost forgotten what it was like
UH-OH.
EXCUSE ME FOR A MOMENT, DEAR.
TAKE YOUR TIME.

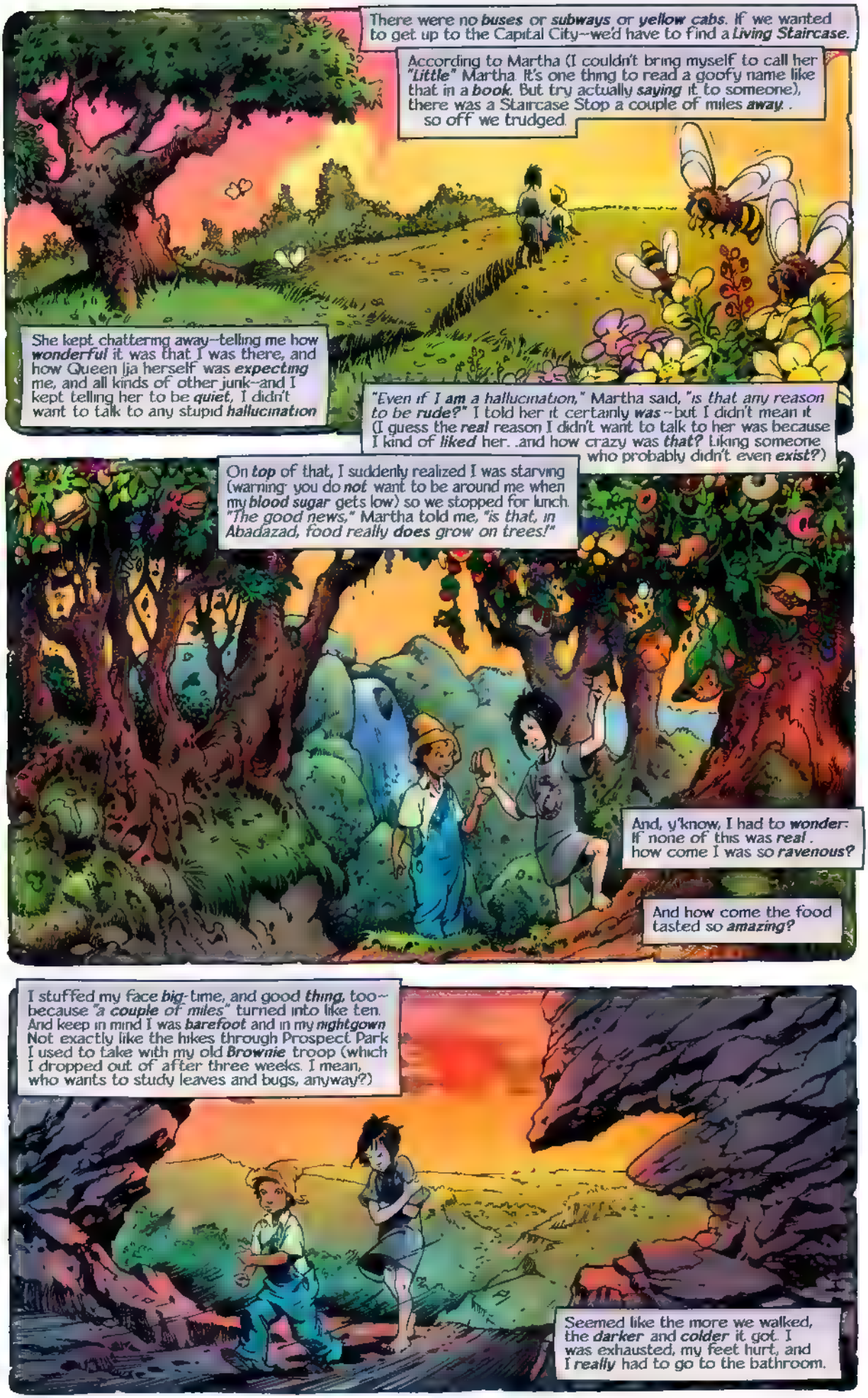
C'MON, ALTHEA--
--SPIT HIM OUT!
PTUI!
HMPH! I WASN'T GOING TO EAT HIM, ANYWAY. SHELLOPPERS TASTE TERRIBLE.
You reek like a denuded bowel, Yet dare to say our taste is foul?!
I offer profound gratitude, You've spared me being flower food Dear Martha, sweet and comely child so beauteous, so wise, so mild
HEY--HOW COME THEY SOUND LIKE SHAKESPEARE ALL OF A SUDDEN? IN THE BOOK THEIR RHYMES WERE--
--IDIOTIC. I KNOW.
MR. BARRIE THOUGHT THE SHELLOPPER'S POETRY WAS A LITTLE TOO SOPHISTICATED FOR CHILDREN, SO--
--HE CHANGED IT?
OH, HE REALIZED LATER WHAT A MISTAKE HE'D MADE. BUT THE FACT IS...HIS VERSIONS OF MY ADVENTURES WERE FAR FROM ACCURATE.
TOOK ME A WHILE, I'LL TELL YOU, TO GET USED TO READING ABOUT MYSELF AS A LITTLE WHITE GIRL WITH RED HAIR AND GREEN EYES.
OH, BUT MR. BARRIE...HE WAS SUCH A LOVELY MAN AND SUCH A WONDERFUL WRITER--AND HE BROUGHT ABADAZAD ALIVE FOR SO MANY PEOPLE--
--THAT I NEVER HAD THE HEART TO COMPLAIN.
NOW LET'S GO--
WHERE?
WHY--TO THE PALACE, OF COURSE! TO THE CAPITAL CITY!
TO INCONCEIVABLE!

IS THAT REALLY...?
INDEED IT IS.
AND-- QUEEN IJA'S UP THERE...? PROFESSOR HEADSTRONG...? MARY ANNETTE...? MR. GLOOM...?
ALL OF THEM, KATIE. AND YOU CAN BET THEY'LL HELP YOU FIND MATT... AND FREE HIM FROM THE LANKY MAN.
MY NAME'S NOT KATIE... IT'S KATE.
AND MY BROTHER IS DEAD. HE DIED A LONG TIME AGO!
LOOK, MARTHA--OR WHOEVER YOU ARE--I DON'T KNOW WHAT'S GOING ON HERE...WHETHER THIS IS A NIGHTMARE... OR SOME KIND OF PATHETIC, DISGUSTING JOKE! BUT WHATEVER IT IS--
I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF IT!
KATIE... KATE! PLEASE--
A MOMENT AGO... I SAW YOUR EYES... I SAW YOUR FAITH. YOU BELIEVED.
IF THERE'S EVEN A CHANCE THAT THIS IS REAL--

--THEN YOU'VE GOT TO COME WITH ME TO INCONCEIVABLE!
YOU'VE JUST GOT TO!

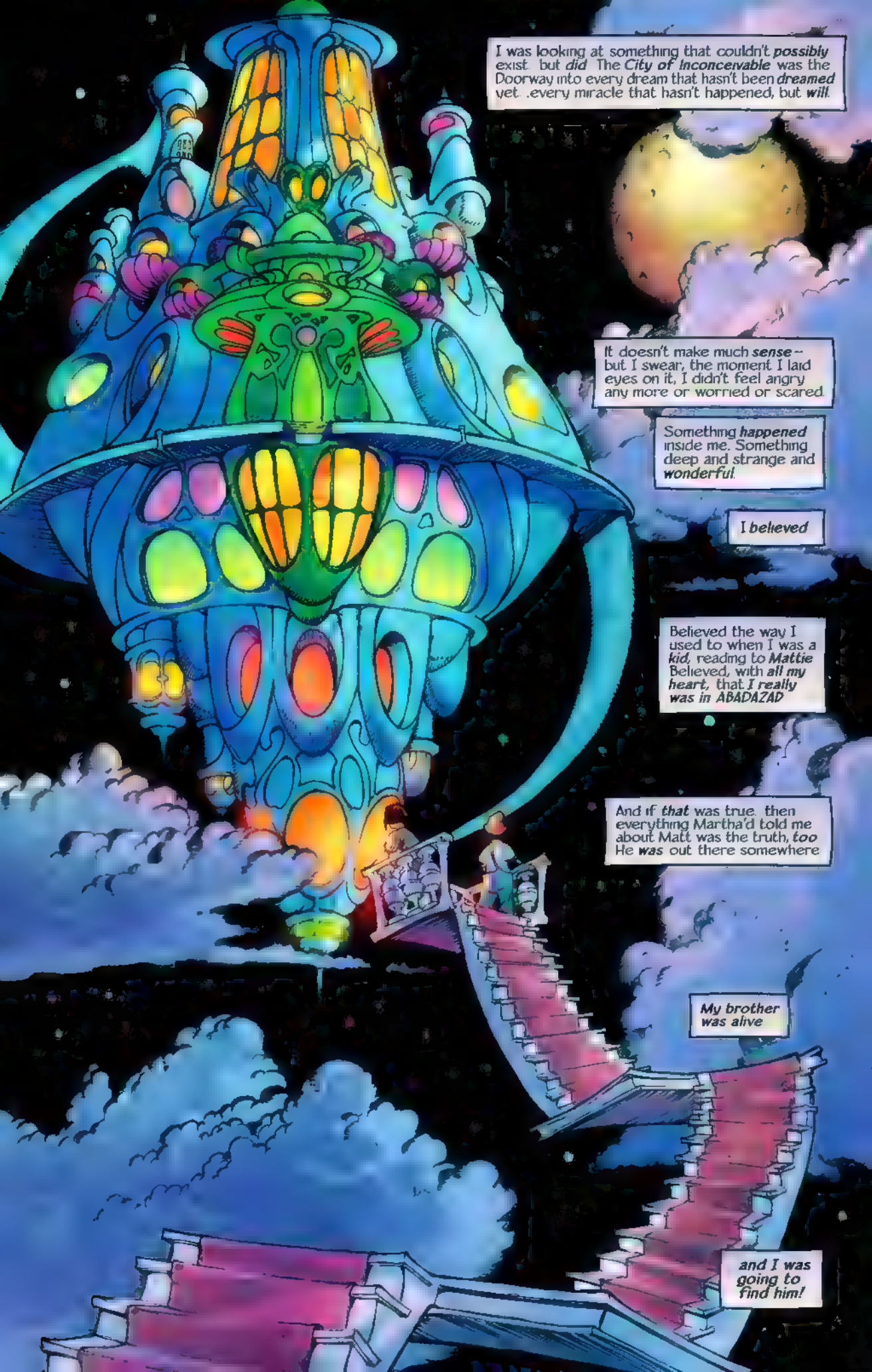

YEAH. YEAH--MAYBE I DO.

BUT I DON'T HAVE TO LIKE IT.
I knew from the books that public transportation in Abadazad wasn't exactly like New York


There were no buses or subways or yellow cabs. If we wanted to get up to the Capital City--we'd have to find a Living Staircase.
According to Martha (I couldn't bring myself to call her "Little" Martha. It's one thing to read a goofy name like that in a book. But try actually saying it to someone), there was a Staircase Stop a couple of miles away. . .
so off we trudged.
She kept chattering away--telling me how wonderful it was that I was there, and how Queen Ija herself was expecting me, and all kinds of other junk--and I kept telling her to be quiet, I didn't want to talk to any stupid hallucination
"Even if I am a hallucination," Martha said, "is that any reason to be rude?" I told her it certainly was--but I didn't mean it (I guess the real reason I didn't want to talk to her was because I kind of liked her. .and how crazy was that? Liking someone who probably didn't even exist?)
On top of that, I suddenly realized I was starving (warning: you do not want to be around me when my blood sugar gets low) so we stopped for lunch. "The good news," Martha told me, "is that, in Abadazad, food really does grow on trees!"
And, y'know, I had to wonder: if none of this was real . how come I was so ravenous?
And how come the food tasted so amazing?
I stuffed my face big-time, and good thing, too--because "a couple of miles" turned into like ten. And keep in mind I was barefoot and in my nightgown. Not exactly like the hikes through Prospect Park I used to take with my old Brownie troop (which I dropped out of after three weeks. I mean, who wants to study leaves and bugs, anyway?)
Seemed like the more we walked, the darker and colder it got. I was exhausted, my feet hurt, and I really had to go to the bathroom.

but there was *no way* I was gonna do it squatting behind a *rock*
WE'RE *LOST*, AREN'T WE?
NO ONE'S *EVER* LOST IN ABADAZAD.
OH, *YEAH*? THEN WHERE *ARE* WE?
EXACTLY WHERE WE'RE SUPPOSED TO BE!
STAIRCASE, KID?
CAN YOU TAKE US UP TO THE *ROYAL PALACE*, PLEASE?
THAT'S WHAT I'M *HERE* FOR, KID...SO CLIMB *ABOARD*. BUT WATCH YER *STEP*, OKAY?
PEOPLE ARE FOREVER STOMPIN' ON MY *NOSE*.
SO HOW ARE *THESE* DINKY STAIRS SUPPOSED TO GET US ALL THE WAY UP *THERE*?
"DINKY"?
I THOUGHT LIVING STAIRCASES ARE SUPPOSED TO BE LIKE *TWO MILES TALL*.
OR DID BARRIE GET *THAT* WRONG, TOO?
OH, *NO*, DEAR--

--HE DIDN'T GET THAT WRONG AT ALL.
How can I explain this?


I was looking at something that couldn't *possibly* exist... but *did*. The *City of Inconceivable* was the Doorway into every dream that hasn't been *dreamed* yet... every miracle that hasn't happened, but *will*.
It doesn't make much *sense*--but I swear, the moment I laid eyes on it, I didn't feel angry any more or worried or scared.
Something *happened* inside me. Something deep and strange and *wonderful*.
I *believed*
Believed the way I used to when I was a *kid*, reading to *Mattie*. Believed, with *all my heart*, that *I really was in ABADAZAD*.
And if *that* was true... then everything Martha'd told me about Matt was the truth, *too*. He *was* out there somewhere.
My brother was alive
and I was going to find him!

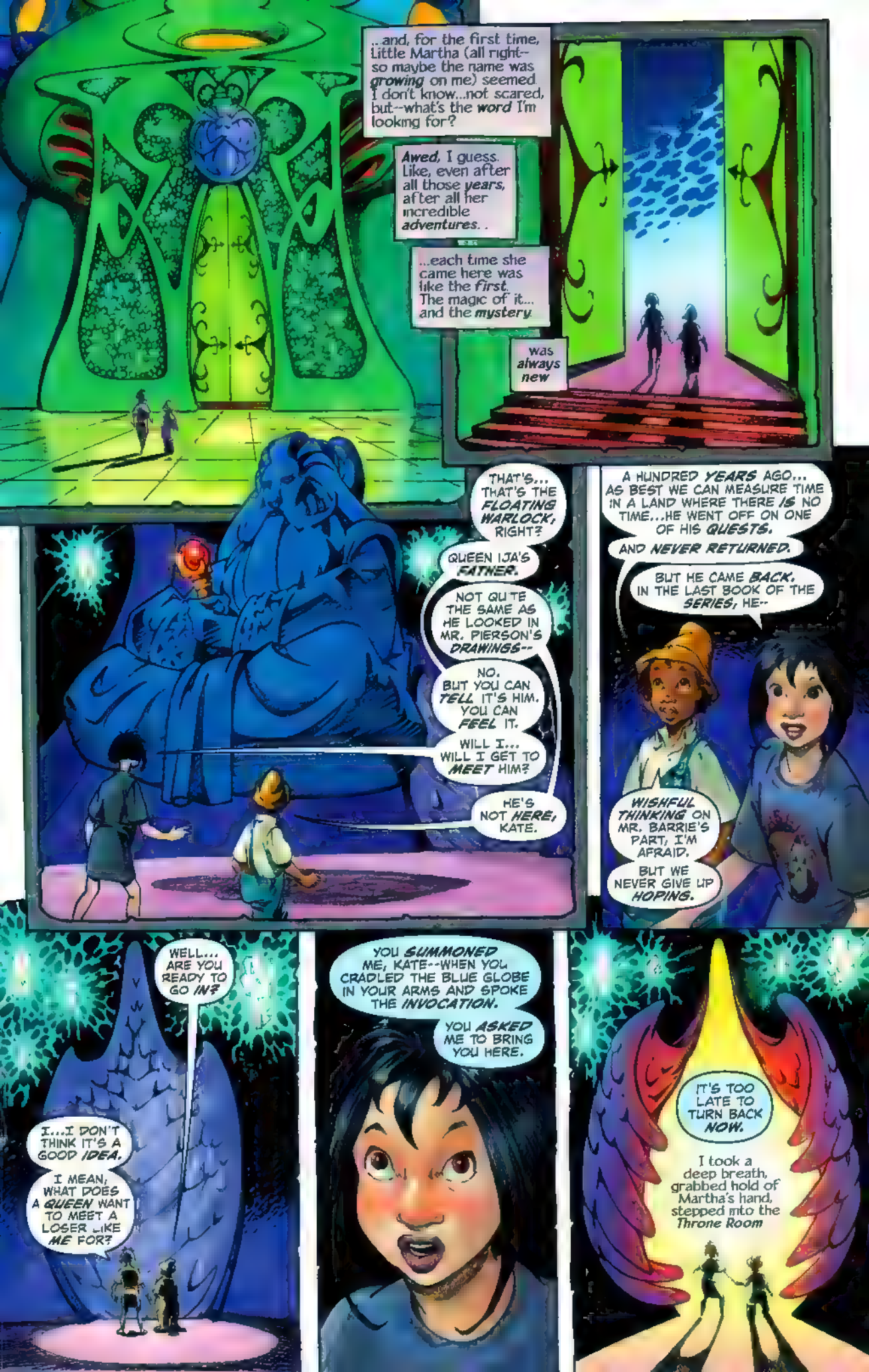
called out, in that voice as sharp as a vulture's beak, and the boys came running; dozens of them, scampering like rats out of the shadows, eyes bright and hungry, mouths twisted into lopsided, venomous smirks.

Little Martha could tell, before they'd even stepped into the lamplight, that these were boys who had never been raised with the kindheartedness, or the firm hand, she had. Both, Martha knew from experience, were equally vital to a child's upbringing. Her father, the eminent Colonel Cooper, was as loving a man as ever walked the earth, but his daughter was possessed of a questing mind and a daring heart, and she could occasionally–well, perhaps more than occasionally–be the cause of no small trouble at 362 Travers Place. The Colonel, having fought in many a distinguished battle in the Civil War, knew how to discipline Little Martha and yet, to his credit, did it without ever lifting a hand.

But these Lanky Boys, as their master called them, were wild, undisciplined and, worst of all, unloved. Most had been stolen from their families as infants, raised in the shadowy bowels of Old Lanks' hidden city, and put to work in his factories as soon as they could walk. How to explain, then, the devotion they showed their soulless "father"? How to explain the way they crowded about him, like hungry ants around a crumb of bread? Some things, dear reader, defy explanation; but if the author were to venture a guess, he would say that, to a child desperate for adult guidance, any attention is better than no attention at all. Even the attention of one so repugnant and cruel as the Lanky Man.

"Do you see," Old Lanks hissed to Little Martha, lining his boys up and displaying them for her as if they were toys on a shelf, "how they adore me? Why I dare say they would all hurl themselves off a cliff to certain doom if it meant my pleasure." A smile, far more lopsided and venomous than his protegés', spread across the Lanky Man's face. "Do you see," the scoundrel continued, "how they are modeled, in every way, upon me? Their clothes, their bearing, their

The Wretched Awful City of
ABADAZAD
"BEADY-EYED"? "DEVILMENT AND GREED"?
NO MATTER HOW MANY TIMES I PERUSE THIS RUBBISH--I NEVER FAIL TO BE PROFOUNDLY INSULTED!
THEN...UH... HOW COME Y'KEEP READIN' IT...?
THERE ARE TWO REASONS--NOT THAT A FEEBLE-MINDED, HALF-WITTED DUNCE LIKE YOURSELF COULD EVER UNDERSTAND THEM.
REASON NUMBER ONE: IT'S ABOUT ME.
REASON NUMBER TWO: STUDYING THESE ACCOUNTS--HOWEVER JAUNDICED--OF MY ENCOUNTERS WITH THAT INSUFFERABLE LITTLE MARTHA--
--WILL HELP ME IN MY EFFORTS TO EVALUATE THE THREAT THIS NEW ARRIVAL POSES TO MY PLANS.
YOU SAYIN' YOU'RE...AFRAID OF SOME LITTLE GIRL?
STOP ASKING QUESTIONS, DODO! WE HAVE MUCH TO DO--MUCH TO PREPARE--
--IF WE'RE TO GIVE THE YOUNG LADY A...PROPER GREETING.
The Staircase dropped us off (gently, I'm happy to report) at the gates of the Royal Palace.


..and, for the first time, Little Martha (all right--so maybe the name was growing on me) seemed. I don't know...not scared, but--what's the word I'm looking for?
Awed, I guess. Like, even after all those years, after all her incredible adventures..
...each time she came here was like the first. The magic of it... and the mystery
was always new
THAT'S... THAT'S THE FLOATING WARLOCK, RIGHT?
QUEEN IJA'S FATHER.
NOT QUITE THE SAME AS HE LOOKED IN MR. PIERSON'S DRAWINGS--
NO. BUT YOU CAN TELL IT'S HIM. YOU CAN FEEL IT.
WILL I... WILL I GET TO MEET HIM?
HE'S NOT HERE, KATE.
A HUNDRED YEARS AGO... AS BEST WE CAN MEASURE TIME IN A LAND WHERE THERE IS NO TIME...HE WENT OFF ON ONE OF HIS QUESTS.
AND NEVER RETURNED.
BUT HE CAME BACK. IN THE LAST BOOK OF THE SERIES, HE--
WISHFUL THINKING ON MR. BARRIE'S PART, I'M AFRAID.
BUT WE NEVER GIVE UP HOPING.
WELL... ARE YOU READY TO GO IN?
I...I DON'T THINK IT'S A GOOD IDEA.
I MEAN, WHAT DOES A QUEEN WANT TO MEET A LOSER LIKE ME FOR?
YOU SUMMONED ME, KATE--WHEN YOU CRADLED THE BLUE GLOBE IN YOUR ARMS AND SPOKE THE INVOCATION.
YOU ASKED ME TO BRING YOU HERE.
IT'S TOO LATE TO TURN BACK NOW.
I took a deep breath, grabbed hold of Martha's hand, stepped into the Throne Room

and there she was.
The *Fairy Queen* herself, *Ija the First*—*ruler of all Abadazad.*
Thing is, she ***was*** Ija—and she ***wasn't***. The Queen *I'd* always read about was blonde-haired and blue-eyed, not much older than me. But *this* Ija—well, at first I didn't even think she was ***human***
It wasn't just the ***three eyes*** and the ***blue skin*** (which, let's face it, was weird ***enough***), it was that she seemed. I dunno... ***ancient***. Not in the way she ***looked***—but in the way she ***felt***. Like she was older than time. Older than ***everything***
*"**Come forward,**"* Queen Ija said—but my legs just wouldn't move. Martha gave me a poke in the ribs with her elbow and I stumbled toward the throne, nearly falling in the Queen's lap.
IS SOMETHING ***WRONG,*** CHILD?
"Wrong?" I wanted to say. *"Nope. What could be wrong? I'm walking around **inside a book**...only nobody actually **looks** like they did in the book, and the dead old lady in the little girl's body tells me you're gonna help me find my brother, who's been **missing** for five years. What could be **wrong**?"* That's what I ***wanted*** to say.
...but my ***lips*** were as frozen as my ***legs*** had been. All that came out of my normally-humongous mouth was this pathetic little ***squeak***.
Queen Ija laughed—I think it was the ***nicest*** laugh I'd ever heard—and it sort of splashed all ***over*** me...

like warm water
YOU'VE HAD A LONG, CONFUSING JOURNEY, KATE. I WANT YOU TO REST.
WE'LL TALK IN THE MORNING-- AND ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED.
REST SOUNDS LIKE A TERRIFIC IDEA--
--UH...YOUR MAJESTY.
So Stupid Me tries to curtsy because, y'know, that's what you're supposed to do when you say goodbye to a Queen.
. isn't it?
DON'T YOU DARE LAUGH
KATE.
YOU'RE FORGETTING SOMETHING.
I...I AM--?

MY DIARY!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND-- HOW DID YOU...?
IT'S MAGIC, CHILD.
OH. RIGHT.
AND, WITH MAGIC, THE HOW IS NOT IMPORTANT.
THE WANTING IS.
YOU DO WANT IT... DON'T YOU, KATE?
Did I want it?
Ever since my jerkhead shrink, Dr Frayda, told my mother I needed to--how'd she put it?--put my tormented thoughts and feelings down on paper
..I'd been pretending (to Jerkhead, to Frantic Frances--and to myself, I guess) that I hated that stupid journal.
But right then I realized that I needed it more than anything That, whatever was happening to me, writing about it was the only way.

I'd get *through* it
Martha took me to my room. Well, it was more like an *apartment*
Hadda be *twice* the size of our place in Brooklyn—and I didn't have to share the bathroom with *anyone* (considering how long I'd been holding it in, that was *great news*)
I stayed awake long enough to fill up a dozen pages with my *psycho ranting*
and then I *conked*
I usually have a *horrible* time falling asleep—but something about being in that place made me feel the way I did before Herbert the Great left. Before we lost *Mattie*:
Y'know, all safe and warm. Protected—and *loved*
For a *little* while, anyway
MATT—?!
THOOM
The whole *city* was shaking. There was a sound—like the biggest thunderstorm in the *history of the world*—echoing through the Palace halls. I ran to the balcony
sure that there must have been some kind of *earthquake*
(Okay, so you can't *have* an earthquake if you're in a city in the sky. So maybe it was a *cloud*-quake or something. What do you *want* from me? I was *half-asleep*.)
But it was [redacted] than that.

The ROCKET HEADS were attacking!
NEXT:
EXPLOSIONS!

Current Issues for Sale...

Next Issue #3

On Sale April 2004

THE CrossGen UNIVERSE

MYSTIC
BRATH
CHIMERA
SOLUS
NEGATION
KISS KISS BANG BANG
THE CROSSOVERS
CROSSGEN CHRONICLES
RAVEN HOUSE
SAURIANS
MARK OF CHARON
El Cazador
THE SILKEN GHOST

In issue one, Kate speaks aloud the words from Franklin O. Barrie's book, *Little Martha in Abadazad*, that will transport her to the astounding land of Abadazad:

"I summon Queen Ija and the Two-Fold Witch to carry me to that place where sorrow has no home, where time has no meaning... where joy lives forever!

"ABADAZAD!"

Like Oz, Narnia, Neverland, and Wonderland before it, Abadazad is a magical realm where curious creatures and peculiar personalities abound. Kate finds herself in a place that resembles the stories she read as a child, but there's a disturbing reality to the fantastic. Characters who were nothing but sweet and loving in the stories she recalls sometimes show a sour and bitter side when met in person.

Kate's tale begins years ago, when she was still Katie, and her beloved little brother, Matt, entered her life...

...and before her father left it.

Alone with their unhappy mother, the now-divorced Frantic Frances, Katie and Matt shared a love for the fantastic realm they visited nightly in the pages of the famous series of books by Franklin O. Barrie about Little Martha's adventures in Abadazad!

Then came the day that Katie and Matt visited the street fair (all by themselves, because Frantic Frances had to work!) and a stranger gave Matt two free coupons for just one more ride...

...from which he never returned.

Katie and Frances (and everyone else!) searched and searched, but Matt was gone. Time marched on by without stopping in for tea or being in any other way courteous, Katie got older, and Frances got grayer, until the day little Martha met the now-bigger Kate.

THE CrossGen UNIVERSE

WAY OF THE RAT

SIGIL

RUSE

Scion

Route 666

R.A. SALVATORE'S DEMONWARS

ARCHARD'S AGENTS

MERIDIAN

BRIAN PULIDO'S Lady Death

ABADAZAD

Sojourn

CROSSED

THE PATH

THE FIRST

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[redacted]

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Kate accepted her strange neighbor's invitation to tea (and cookies!) and listened to the old woman's stranger story about how she (this old lady!) was Little Martha, all grown up! She shows off trinkets and treasures to verify her tall tale, but Kate retains her surly cynicism. Abadazad can't be real!

Even the actual blue globe of the Two-Fold witch can't convince Kate. Nor can her news that Matt is alive!

Martha can't convince Kate she isn't making up her stories about her adventures in Abadazad (Although she remembers very clearly sharing her stories with Franklin O. Barrie himself!)

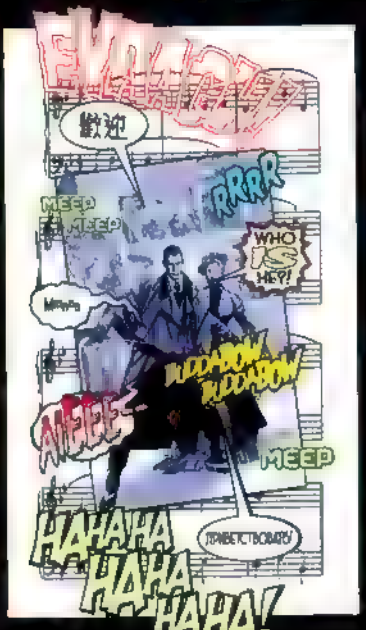
and Kate is angry about Matt's being mentioned, so they let a slammed door come between them and friendship.

Kate goes on with her life and Martha's own comes to an end. Instructions have been left behind, though, so a particular package is delivered to a specific address, to Kate personally. Inside is the blue globe of the Two-Fold witch.

Which brings us back to the part where Kate says:

"ABADAZAD!"

NOW WITH SOUND EFFECTS, MULTIPLE LANGUAGES AND MUSIC!



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-AintItCoolNews.com

ABADAZAD™

"DeMatteis spins a tale not unlike *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Peter Pan*, *Alice in Wonderland*, and the more recent *Harry Potter* books, but it has an identity all its own..."
-Craig Reade, Comixtreme.com

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ABADAZAD

J. M. DeMatteis Mike Ploog Nick Bell jduteau

CrossGen
#3 MAY 2004

Nine-year-old Kate Jameson took her little brother, Matt, to a Brooklyn street fair - where he vanished without a trace. The heartbroken girl retreated into a series of children's books she and Matt loved: the Tales of Abadazad.

All hope for Matt's return seemed lost...

...until five years later—when a bizarre encounter with a neighbor sent Kate plunging through a magical Blue Globe and across the worlds...

...into the real Abadazad.

Chapter Three:
EXPLOSIONS

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weeping violently. "Don't cry, Master Wix," Little Martha told him. "Be brave."

Wix looked at her through his paraffin tears and mustered a courageous, heartfelt, and utterly pathetic, smile. "If you say so," he whimpered, allowing the girl to dab at his cheeks with the hem of her dress; "but," he continued, "I really don't see why I should stop. We are doomed, after all."

"Only a fool," insisted Little Martha, her temper suddenly flaring (she was an admirable girl, but hardly perfect), "would say such a thing. This," she continued, stamping her foot, "is Abadazad, and no one here is doomed unless they choose to be."

Master Wix looked around the forbidding cave, then out toward the whirling snows that blew with terrible determination. "I mean no disrespect, Martha, for you know that I adore you." (This was undeniably true.) "And," he continued, "I make no claims to intelligence. In fact, the very act of thinking gives me a miserable headache." (This, too, was undeniable.) "But," he concluded, "given our predicament, I would think that you were the fool, not I."

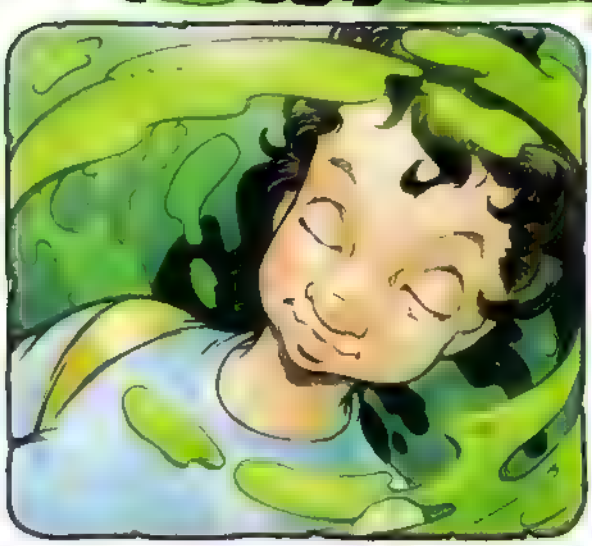
Little Martha laughed, all temper gone, and embraced Wix. "Perhaps I am," she said warmly. "The grandest fool who ever lived." She took his hand and guided him toward the mouth of the cave, gazing out, with sudden seriousness, at the deepening storm. "But, fool or not, I've learned some things during my adventures here in Queen Ija's kingdom."

"What have you learned?" Master Wix asked, with sincerity; for, despite his limited intelligence, he was always eager to expand his knowledge.

"I have learned," Little Martha replied, "that the greatest adventures are the ones that seem utterly hopeless. For these," she went on, turning to face him now, "always end in the greatest joy."

"I don't know if I understand that," Wix said, scratching

--HIS HEAD SO HARD SEVERAL FLECKS OF WAX STUCK TO HIS FINGERNAILS.
"BUT," HE ADDED, EMPHATICALLY, "I'D VERY MUCH LIKE TO BELIEVE IT--"
"--SO I WILL."
MATT?
MATTIE...?



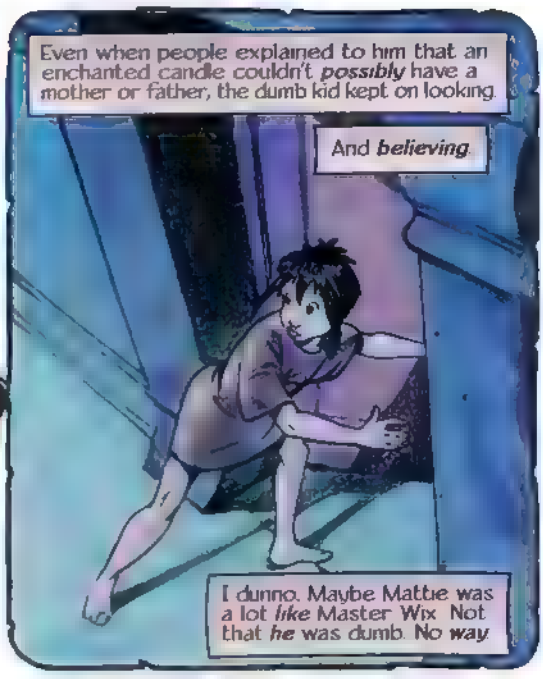
WHADDAYA S'POSE HE'S *THINKIN'* ABOUT IN THERE--HUH, *LANKS?*

FIRSTLY, MY DEAR SNIKKER--YOU WILL ADDRESS ME AS LORD HIGH MUCKAMUCK, LANKY MAN THE FIRST. NOT "LANKS"!
SURE THING, LA--
UH... LORD HIGH WHATEVER YOU SAID.
AND SECONDLY--
I DON'T BELIEVE HE THINKS AT ALL. WHAT HE DOES--
--IS DREAM.
THAT'S WHY HE'S HERE. THAT'S WHY--
--THEY'RE ALL HERE.
BECAUSE I NEED THEIR DREAMS.
BUT YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT--WOULD YOU, SNIKKER?
YOU'RE TOO DULL. TOO UNBEARABLY ORDINARY.
UTTERLY BEREFT OF IMAGINATION.
AND THAT'S JUST THE WAY I LIKE YOU.
NOW IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--

"--I MUST CHECK ON THE PROGRESS OF MY...OTHER CHILDREN."
My brother's favorite character from the Abadazad books wasn't one of the mega-popular ones like *The Historceress* or *Professor Headstrong* or *The Balloonicorn*

Don't get me wrong. He *loved* them. He loved them *all*
But Mattie always went for the underdog--so, of course, he got himself stuck on a second-string character. A little boy called *Master Wix*
BONNK
BONNK
Master Wix *wasn't*. A *boy*, that is. He was actually an enchanted mass of wax ...more of *a candle* than a human being. But Wix believed, with all his heart, that he was *real*.

and Mattie believed, with all *his* heart, in Master Wix
I always thought Wix was kind of pathetic. I mean, he spent all his time searching for his *parents*
BONNK
BONNK


Even when people explained to him that an enchanted candle couldn't *possibly* have a mother or father, the dumb kid kept on looking.
And *believing*.
I dunno. Maybe Mattie was a lot *like* Master Wix. Not that *he* was dumb. No *way*.

It's just that, after *Dad* left, Matt never gave up hoping that Herbert the Great would make some *Grand Return*
SLAM

"He'll be back for my *birthday*," he'd say. Or "I *know* he'll be home for Christmas." Or Easter. Or *Groundhog Day*
BONNK

Nothing I said--and believe me, I said *plenty*--could stop that kid from wishing and hoping
BONNK
BONNK

KREEEK
Guess he figured if a lump of wax could become a living, breathing *boy*--then why couldn't a lump like Herbert the Great get a sudden burst of the *guilts* and come running home?
I *met* Master Wix (yeah, I know how crazy that sounds. Do you have *any idea* how crazy it is to *write* it?) not long after I first got to Abadazad.
KREEEK
The same night the *Rocket Heads*
BOOM

attacked *inconceivable*
WHOAAAA!
It was becoming clearer every minute that there were some major differences between *this* Abadazad and the one I'd read about
In the Franklin O. Barrie stories, the Rocket Heads were these bizarro creatures created by the *Lanky Man*. Every few books, Lanks would send them out to invade the capital city. (And every few books, they'd *fail Miserably*.)
But as *weird* as they were with their swollen heads and gigantic bat-ears, they always seemed more *goofy* than threatening. In fact, when they made the Abadazad *cartoon show*, the Rockets were the funniest things on it. Matt used to roll around on the living room floor, laughing *his* head off whenever they shot off *theirs*
But those *real* Rocket Heads were a *whole* different story

Back in Brooklyn, *Little Martha* (well, I guess she was old *Mrs. Vaughn* then)..
told me that my brother had been kidnapped by the Lanky Man
so it didn't take a genius to realize that he'd probably sent the Rockets *after* me
But what I didn't *get* was why he waited till I came to *inconceivable*
I mean, if he could grab *Mattie* back in the Real World
how come he didn't take me *too*?
OW!
BUTTOINNG!
OW!
BOINNK
OW!
BOINNK
OW!
WHAP

HIYA.
UH...HI.
WAS THAT YOU WHO OPENED THE DOORS FOR ME...?
NUH-UH. THE DOORS DID IT THEMSELVES.
RIGHT. DOORS OPEN BY THEMSELVES. HEADS CHASE YOU AROUND. DEAD OLD LADIES TURN INTO EIGHT-YEAR-OLD GIRLS.

THAT'S ABADAZAD FOR YOU.
ABADAZAD!
THIS IS SO TOTALLY WEIRD. I MEAN I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I'M REALLY HERE.

WELL, Y'BETTER GET USED TO IT...'CAUSE I THINK YOU RE GONNA BE HERE FOR A WHILE.
WHO ARE YOU, KID?
WHO D'YA THINK?

MASTER WIX...AT YOUR SERVICE!
MASTER WIX...?
I KNOW I'M SUPPOSED T'BOW WHEN I MEET PEOPLE...AT LEAST THAT'S WHAT PROFESSOR HEADSTRONG KEEPS TELLIN' ME--
--BUT EVERY TIME I DO, I END UP SPLITTIN' MY PANTS!
Something about Wix made me feel I dunno. like he was an old friend
Like we'd known each other forever
UH... NICE TO MEET YOU, MASTER WIX. I'M KATE.
I KNOW. MARTHA TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU.
AND I'VE READ ALL ABOUT YOU.
ALTHOUGH YOU LOOK A LITTLE DIFFERENT THAN YOU DO IN THE BOOKS--
BUT, HEY-- SO DOES EVERYBODY AROUND HERE.
Or maybe longer.
YOU LIVE HERE IN THE LIBRARY, RIGHT?
YEP. AIN'T IT GREAT?
CAN'T REALLY READ--
--PROFESSOR'S BEEN TRYING TO TEACH ME FOR LONGER THAN I CAN REMEMBER BUT I JUST CAN'T SEEM T'GET IT--
--SO MOSTLY I JUST LOOK AT THE PICTURES.

BUT I LOVE THE WAY THE BOOKS SMELL...AN' THE WAY THEY FEEL...IF Y'KNOW WHAT I MEAN.
I SURE DO.
SOMETIMES... WHEN I DITCH SCHOOL... I GO TO THIS USED BOOK STORE ON SEVENTH AVENUE.
THEY'VE GOT THOUSANDS OF THESE ANCIENT PAPERBACKS AND I CAN SPEND HOURS IN THERE, JUST--
SKAAKK!
WIX... RUN!!
LOOK AT 'EM? AIN'T THEY THE FUNNIEST THINGS YOU EVER SEEN?
HEE-HEE HEE-HEE
BONKK
BONKK
HAAAAWW!
THIS ISN'T A JOKE!
SO, HOW COME I'M LAUGHIN'?
BONKK
BOOM
YOU'RE NOT GONNA BE LAUGHING IN A FEW SECONDS WHEN THOSE ROCKET HEADS EX--

SEE? I TOLD YOU THEY WERE DANGEROUS! I TOLD YOU THEY--
WIX?
WIX? WHERE ARE YOU?
DOWN HERE.
WIX!
DON'T BE SCARED! I'LL PULL YOU UP!
WHO'S SCARED?
THIS IS A GREAT VIEW!
I CAN SEE ALL THE WAY T'MISS STRINGER'S VILLAGE!
YOU REALLY OUGHTA COME DOWN HERE AND--
YOU'RE MENTAL, DO YOU KNOW THAT?
THANKS!
THAT WASN'T A COMPLIMENT.
OH.
All of a sudden, I don't know why
my hands were shaking.. my heart was pounding. Took everything I had not to start bawling like a baby
HEY, KATE-- WHATSAMATTER? YOU DON'T LOOK SO GOOD.
Well, maybe I do know why At least I know what Dear Old Dr Frayda would say Wix remmded me of my brother (I mean he was Mattie's favorite character, after all) so I was..
What's that word she uses so much I could scream?

I was "projecting" my feelings for Matt onto him
LOOK, YOU DON'T HAVE T'WORRY--I'M MADE OUTTA WAX. AIN'T NOTHIN' CAN HURT ME!
EVEN IF I MELT-- AND, BETWEEN YOU 'N' ME, I'VE DONE IT A FEW TIMES--
--QUEEN IJA ALWAYS FINDS A WAY TO SLAP ME BACK TOGETHER.
And
so what if I was?
UH, OH--

HEY! WHAT JUST HAPPENED?
SHE DID!
QUEEN IJA!
YOU DID IT, YOUR MAJESTY! YOU SAVED THE CITY! YOU SAVED US ALL!
HI, SWEETHEART!
MARTHA-- ISN'T IT AMAZING? DID YOU SEE THE WAY IJA KICKED THOSE ROCKET HEADS'--
--BUTTS...?
WHOA! HOW ABOUT A LITTLE WARNING BEFORE YOU START ZAPPING PEOPLE AROUND LIKE THAT?
IT'S CALLED MAGIC, DEAR. GET USED TO IT.
AND AS FOR--AS YOU SO COLORFULLY PUT IT--"KICKING THOSE ROCKET HEADS' BUTTS"--

--I HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.
BUT I SAW THE WAY THOSE HEADS TOOK OFF!
IT WAS LIKE THEY COULDN'T HELP THEMSELVES...LIKE THEY WERE UNDER SOME KIND OF SPELL OR--
OH, THEY WERE ENCHANTED, DEAR. BUT THE SPELL WASN'T MINE.
YOU SEE, KATE--NO ENEMY CAN ATTACK THIS CITY...OR ANY OTHER PART OF MY KINGDOM.
OH, THEY CAN MAKE THEIR SHARE OF MISCHIEF... AS THE ROCKET HEADS DID. BUT ONLY FOR A FEW MINUTES. QUITE SOON, THE POWER OF BELIEF TURNS THEM AWAY.
BELIEF... IN WHAT?
SOMETIMES WHAT YOU DON'T BELIEVE IN IS AS POWERFUL AS WHAT YOU DO. AND THE PEOPLE OF ABADAZAD SIMPLY DON'T BELIEVE--
--IN WAR.
AND THAT CONVICTION IS QUITE ENOUGH TO INSURE THAT NO OPPOSING FORCE CAN EVER HARM US... IN ANY WAY.
BUT...BUT THEY ATTACKED ME! AND THEY WERE BLOWING THINGS UP AND--
DO YOU SEE ANY DAMAGE FROM THEIR INVASION?
NO.
AND IS THERE SO MUCH AS A SCRATCH ON YOU?
WELL... NO. BUT--
BUT WHAT ABOUT IN BOOK SIXTEEN-- "THE BATTLE FOR ABADAZAD"-- WHEN PRINCESS AJI INVADED YOUR KINGDOM AND YOU HAD TO SEND THE ROYAL ARMY OF ABADAZAD OUT TO--
AH, YES.
THE BOOKS.

were spread wide as the mountains themselves, cutting through the clouds. The tormented cries of the air-sprites, who felt the full-force of those razor-sharp wings, echoed down across the valley with heartrending finality.

Soon the dark creatures sailed low over the battlefield, their massive jaws, puntuated with teeth that resembled nothing more than thousands of finely-honed spears, hungry to devour the the Abadazadian forces that bravely, if futilely, confronted them.

From her perch above the fray, Princess Aji observed the tumult. This was, of course, the moment she'd waited for, prayed for; the moment when Queen Ija's army would be routed, when the gateway to the capital city would be flung open and she, Aji the Exiled, would, at long last, ascend to the throne that her hated sister had usurped so long ago. Why, then, was there no joy in this moment? Why, then, did she feel like rushing to the dungeon where Ija was jailed, flinging herself at her sister's feet, begging for forgiveness? Why, then, did tears fall from her cheeks, turning the ground at her feet black and molten?

"So you've learned, my daughter," a voice behind Aji intoned, rich with a deep and inconsolable sorrow, "that victory is not so sweet as you imagined."

Aji whirled, her tears drying, her face hardening into a rictus of spite and loathing. "No," she hissed, "not sweet at all. But necessary."

The Floating Warlock drifted up toward the Levitating Tent, his silver hair, grown well past his waist, trailing behind him like the sails of a great ship. Even now, it was impossible for Aji to tell if she was facing a ghost or a man. Perhaps, she thought, her father had always been both or, more probably, neither. Perhaps he was something so different from other beings that it was as fruitless for her to try and understand him as it was for the warriors below to combat the ebon-winged Gerrmaynes. "Necessary?" the Warlock said, in a voice that both pitied and mocked the Princess. "Yes, I have heard that word applied to such things before; and, no doubt, it will be applied again in other lands, other times. But not here. Not in my country."

"And what," Princess Aji rejoined, "makes you believe that you will be able to stop me? Ija's army is all but decimated. The people of Abadazad have lost

I'M AFRAID THAT WAS ANOTHER ONE OF MR. BARRIE'S... EMBELLISHMENTS.
YOU MEAN-- HE MADE IT UP?
PRECISELY.
I DON'T GET IT.
WHY WOULD BARRIE DO THAT? WHY--
THERE WAS A WAR IN YOUR WORLD...A VERY TERRIBLE WAR, AS I UNDERSTAND IT--
THE FIRST WORLD WAR, YOUR MAJESTY.
THE FIRST? THERE WAS MORE THAN ONE?
I'M... AFRAID SO.
"MR. BARRIE'S ONLY SON WAS A SOLDIER IN THAT BRUTAL CONFLICT--AND ALL THE POOR MAN'S FEARS AND WORRIES ABOUT HIS CHILD'S SAFETY...AND THE SAFETY OF HIS NATION...WEIGHED HEAVILY UPON HIM.
"SO HE POURED HIS DESPAIR, HIS RAGE AND HELPLESSNESS, INTO HIS STORIES.
"THERE ARE MANY WHO BELIEVE THOSE FINAL TALES ARE MR. BARRIE'S GREATEST WORK."
I-- AM NOT ONE OF THEM.
PLEASE DON'T CRY, YOUR MAJESTY.
OUR TEARS ARE IMPORTANT, KATE.
WITHOUT THEM--OUR HEARTS WOULD BURST.

BUT YOU KNOW ALL ABOUT THAT, DON'T YOU?
ALL THESE YEARS SINCE YOUR BROTHER WAS TAKEN--
--AND YOU HAVEN'T CRIED NEARLY ENOUGH.
YOUR... YOUR MAJESTY--
--WILL YOU HELP ME FIND HIM? WILL YOU HELP ME GET MATT BACK?
OF COURSE, I WILL, KATE. BUT WE NEED A LITTLE TIME BEFORE--
TIME? I HAVEN'T SEEN MY BROTHER SINCE I WAS NINE YEARS OLD! WE'VE GOT TO DO SOMETHING NOW!
THAT'S EXACTLY WHAT LANKY MAN WANTS.
HE SENT HIS ROCKET HEADS TO STIR YOU TO RASH ACTION.
HE'D BE DELIGHTED IF YOU SET OFF FOR THE WRETCHEDLY AWFUL CITY BEFORE YOU'VE BEEN FULLY PREPARED.

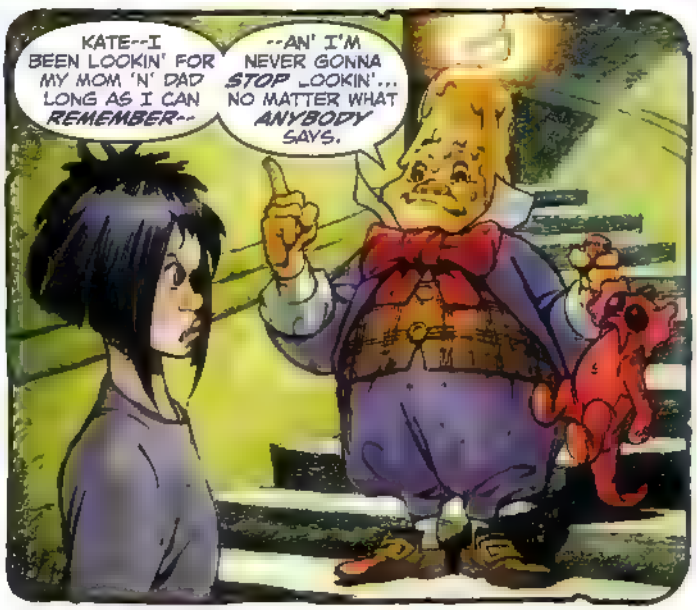
YEAH? WELL, AT LEAST HE'S DOING SOMETHING--
--WHICH IS MORE THAN I CAN SAY FOR YOU!
KATE! KATE-- DON'T!
LEAVE... ME--

--ALONE!
SLAM
Okay, okay--so maybe I was rude. And maybe I felt rotten about it.

but the fact was my brother'd been Lanky Man's prisoner for five years. Five years. And what had the great Queen Ija done in all that time?
KATE!
Nothing!
DIDN'T YOU HEAR ME, MARTHA? I SAID LEAVE ME--

OH.
SORRY, KID. I DIDN'T KNOW IT WAS YOU.
BUT LISTEN--THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING BACK IN THERE TO GROVEL IN FRONT OF THE ROYAL PROCRASTINATOR. SHE CAN--
NAH, NAH-- Y'GOT IT ALL WRONG! I WANNA GO WITH YOU!

YOU WHAT?


KATE--I BEEN LOOKIN' FOR MY MOM 'N' DAD LONG AS I CAN REMEMBER--
--AN' I'M NEVER GONNA STOP LOOKIN'... NO MATTER WHAT ANYBODY SAYS.

FAMILY... FAMILY'S ALL WE GOT. YOU CAN'T WAIT AROUND. Y'GOTTA GO AFTER MATT RIGHT NOW.
YOU KNOW THE WAY OUTTA THIS DUMP?
FOLLOW ME!
THE FLOATING WARLOCK USED ALL KINDS O'SECRET PASSAGEWAYS AND HIDDEN TUNNELS SO HE COULD COME AND GO WITHOUT ANYONE NOTICIN'!
I DON'T EVEN THINK THE QUEEN KNOWS ABOUT MOST OF 'EM--
--BUT I DO!
HOW...?
MAYBE I AIN'T AS DUMB AS I LOOK!
IT'S AWFULLY DARK DOWN THERE. YOU SURE THIS IS THE WAY OUT...?
HEY...I AIN'T NEVER BEEN WRONG YET!

PLAAASH
WHERE ARE WE?
I DON'T KNOW!
YOU SAID YOU KNEW EVERY SECRET PASSAGE! YOU SAID YOU'VE NEVER BEEN WRONG!
WELL, I HAVEN'T BEEN--
--TILL NOW.

When I was just a little squirt back in those ancient days before *Saint Matt* was born .my dead beat father took me to see *Pinocchio*
I hate to admit it-- but most of the junk I watched back then had brain damaged *hand puppets* or fuzzy *purple dinosaurs* in them
So here's the first movie I ever see on the big screen (and when you're four years old, the operative word is *big*) and it's scaring me half *to death*. Not that I'm gonna admit it to *Herbert the Great* We get through *most* of it without me screaming or fainting
Then that *humongous whale* shows up.

One look at that ugly fish and I wet my pants and then, for good measure
threw up in my father's popcorn
Get the picture?
KATIE...?!
NEXT:
WATERLOGGED!

Current Issues on Sale...

Next Issue #4

On Sale May 2004

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El Cazador
THE SILKEN GHOST

A few moments with J.M. DeMatteis, Author of Abadazad:

1) When did you and Kate Jameson first cross paths?

I was visiting old friends in Park Slope, Brooklyn. (I grew up in Brooklyn and still venture back into that strange and magical world on rare occasions.) Their daughter, who was eighteen at the time, had a few friends over... including one very punked-out kid with dyed black hair and too many earrings. Over lunch I began doing what I often do: ranting and raving about the brilliance of Franklin O. Barrie's Abadazad books. (I can't help it. I'm obsessed.) The more I raved, the more I noticed this one girl, the punked-out one, staring at me. A little too intensely.

At one point, later in the day, the girl, who said her name was Kate, came over to me. "You really love the Abadazad books?" she asked me, with no small amount of suspicion. I said yes, I did. She thought about that and then asked: "You really a writer?" When I said yes, I really was, she just nodded–she still seemed suspicious of me–and walked away.

So now it's much later in the day and I'm getting ready to leave and Kate strolls up to me, she was trying to be casual but there was real intensity in her eyes. "What?" I asked. "Can I," she said, and I could see that this was difficult for her, "send you something?" I finally understood: the kid was a writer and she wanted me to read her work. So I said sure (I love working with aspiring writers), gave her my address –and forgot about it.

About a week later, a package arrived. It was a fat manuscript–a novel, I assumed–but I could see that it was cobbled together from Kate's own diary. At least it seemed to be. Until the part when Kate started talking about Old Martha and the Blue Globe and travelling to Abadazad. I didn't know whether the kid was a liar, a genius, or a lunatic... but I found the story incredibly compelling, to say the least.

It was very soon after that that Kate offered me absolute proof that her story was true. Of course she swore me to secrecy so I can't tell you what the proof was. But, believe me, I now know, without a doubt, that Abadazad exists and that Kate has really been there.

2) Why was Kate willing to tell her stories to you?

I don't know. Maybe because I'm someone who, despite being proclaimed an "adult" by the world, never stopped believing in magic and miracles, Santa Claus and Secret Worlds. There aren't that many of us out there... and I think, when we meet, we intuitively recognize each other. Deep down, I've always believed that Abadazad exists. What Kate did was to confirm it for me.

3) What's your own most vivid childhood storybook memory?

There are two, actually. One was when I was very, very young–maybe three or four–and my parents took me to the Avenue J Library for the first time. I sat in the Children's Section and immediately discovered Dr. Seuss. It was years later when I learned that Seuss had been hugely influenced by the Abadazad books in general and Arthur Pierson's illustrations in particular. In fact, if you look through some of the original Abadazad books, you can actually see the seeds of the Seuss style. Look at

THE CrossGen UNIVERSE
WAY OF THE RAT
SIGIL
RUSE
Scion
Route 666
R.A. SALVATORE'S DEMONWARS
ARCHARD'S AGENTS
MERIDIAN
BRIAN PULIDO'S Lady Death
ABADAZAD
Sojourn
CRUX
THE PATH
THE FIRST

THE CrossGen UNIVERSE
MYSTIC
BRATH
CHIMERA
SOLUS
NEGATION
KISS KISS BANG BANG
THE CROSSOVERS
CROSSGEN CHRONICLES
RAVEN HOUSE
SAURIANS UNNATURAL SELECTION
MARK OF CHARON
El Cazador
THE SILKEN GHOST

Pierson's rendition of the Wubbtales–you know, those wacky little fish that hang around with The Waterlogged Warlock?–then take a look at "One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish"–and the influence is clear as a bell.

My other favorite storybook memory was when–I think it was in the first grade–I was in the school library at P.S. 152 and found an old, moldy copy of "Little Martha In Abadazad." That started a love affair with Franklin O. Barrie's books that has yet to end.

4) Was Kate able to shed light on any parts of Abadazad not already described in Franklin O. Barrie's many books?

Kate discovered early on that there were many, many differences between the Abadazad in the books and the real place. But the thing that amazed me was how Barrie, while totally distorting the details, always managed to catch the soul of the place. Which is why, I think, most Abadazadians treasure those books. Barrie is quite the hero in Abadazad–and deservedly so.

5) I notice you've authored a number of new Abadazad novels, short stories, and children's activity books. Why does Barrie's fantasy world resonate so strongly with you?

As I noted before, I've always believed, in the deeps of my heart, that Abadazad was, and is, real. When I was a kid reading those wonderful stories, I had a few intensely strange experiences that I didn't really understand at the time, but now, having learned the truth about Abadazad... well, maybe I'll write about them one day. Anyway, having met Kate and having experienced the reality of Abadazad through her (and through other means that I really can't get into here), I can only say that I'll probably be writing about Abadazad for the rest of my life. And maybe longer.

6) What do you mean by that? "Maybe longer"?

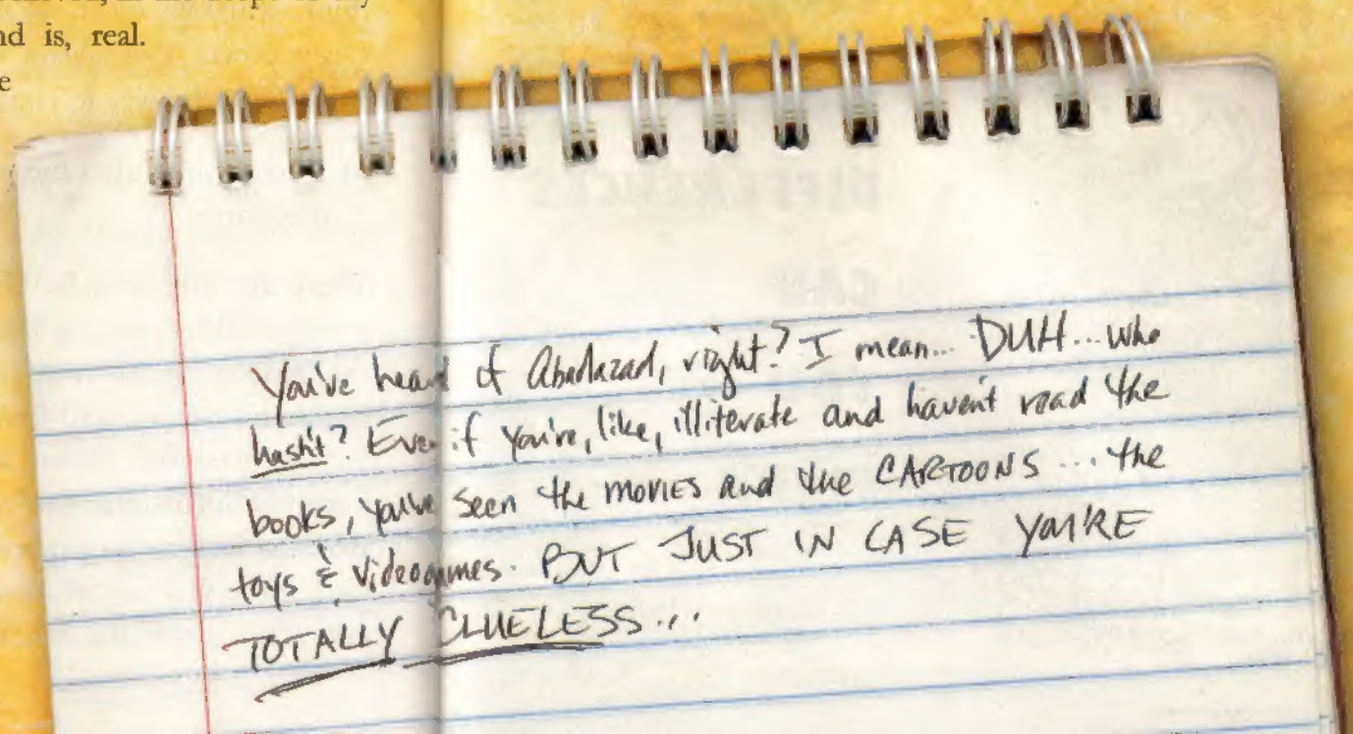
Sorry. Sworn to secrecy.

7) Who's your favorite of the many Abadazad illustrators?

I adore Pierson's stuff... he was one of the greats... but I'm not crazy about most of the illustrators that followed him. For that matter, I'm not crazy about many of the writers who tried their hands at Abadazad books since Barrie's death. But I have to say that my all-time favorite Abadazad illustrator is Mike Ploog. You look at his work and you're really in Abadazad. The guy's an absolute genius!

8) What about the work of Tamlin Broode?

Broode worked for years with Barrie's daughter, P.J. Barrie. They did, I think, fifteen books together and there are people who swear that Broode is the definitive Abadazad artist. Me? I never really liked his work. It seemed to me that he was all technique (brilliant technique, I'll admit) and no heart. That he was drawing Abadazad... but didn't really believe in it. And if you're going to bring these stories to life, you've got to believe.


You've heard of Abadazad, right? I mean... DUH... Who hasn't? Even if you're, like, illiterate and haven't read the books, you've seen the movies and the CARTOONS ... the toys & videogames. BUT JUST IN CASE YA'RE TOTALLY CLUELESS...

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ABADAZAD
Sojourn
CROSSED
THE PATH
THE FIRST

PICTURE PERFECT?

THE BOTTOM PICTURE IS DIFFERENT FROM THE TOP PICTURE...

HOW MANY DIFFERENCES CAN YOU FIND?

FIND THE ANSWERS ON THE INSIDE BACK COVER!

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